Lady Beaconsfield

And her Times

By

F. E. Baily

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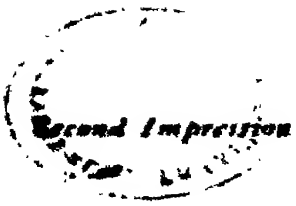
With 17 Illustrations



HUTCHINSON & CO.
(Publishers) Ltd.
London

Acc. No. 11397
Class No. G.10.
Book No. 5

Made and Printed in Great Britain at
The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.
1935

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Acknowledgments

NO one could write a single word about Disraeli or Lady Beaconsfield without acknowledging his great indebtedness to that monumental biography *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, by William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle, and I acknowledge mine wholeheartedly. Most of such quotations as there are have been made from the Monypenny-Buckle *Life*, unless it is stated otherwise in the text.

For information about Lady Beaconsfield's early days I am indebted to *Mary Anne Disraeli*, by James Sykes, and to Elizabeth Lee's *Wives of the Prime Ministers* for certain details in the lives of Catherine and William Gladstone.

The anecdotes about Lady Beaconsfield are quoted so widely that it is impossible to trace them to the original source, but if any special acknowledgment is needed it is hereby made. The bibliography sets out such works as I have consulted in addition to those mentioned already.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Librarian, the Admiralty, for kindly giving me detailed information about H.M.S. *Ceres*, and to my secretary for her invaluable assistance in preparing the typescript, compiling the index, and verifying details.

Last, as it is almost impossible to produce the faultless book may I apologise in advance for any error that may remain after the final proof-reading.

F. E. Baily

LADY BEACONSFIELD
AND HER TIMES

I

MARY ANNE

LADY BEACONSFIELD, that lovely and adorable lady was born Mary Anne Evans in the year 1792.

It is a long time ago—a hundred and forty-two years to be exact—but time has not dimmed her glory, that of the perfect wife, so much more rare and shining than that of the perfect mother. The natural vanity of women, worshipping in their children an extension of themselves, makes perfect motherhood easy, but to become the perfect wife means continual self-sacrifice and self-effacement on behalf of another grown-up person of the opposite sex. This women find very difficult, if not impossible; they desire and accept homage from men, but to pay homage to a particular man is almost more than a woman can bear.

From her forty-seventh year onward, because she was forty-seven when she married for the second time, Mary Anne's whole life was an act of homage to and admiration for her husband, Disraeli. She mothered him, nursed him, used her own financial resources to stave off his creditors, provided him with the very roof over his head, and above all had absolute and unshakable faith in him.

Disraeli possessed what the greatest of his biographers calls a dæmonic ambition, with which went the fighting quality that enables a man to face any odds, but the reverse of his character shows us a feverish, temperamental being, capable of the most complete depression. The temperamental side of Disraeli could only be assuaged by some woman in complete sympathy with him who also admired him, for he needed the stimulus

of admiration in order to go on and conquer. It would be a mistake to despise him as a vain man. The need of admiration formed part of his character, but no man was ever more chivalrous and charming to women than Disraeli. Thus Mary Anne had her reward. She was the perfect wife, but her husband never missed an opportunity of telling her so, and she knew she was appreciated, which is what every wife longs to know.

It is impossible not to refer to Lady Beaconsfield as Mary Anne, because that is what her husband called her, what all her friends called her, and what she called herself in her letters. The fact that all thought and spoke of her as Mary Anne bears witness to her charm. Even in her old age she displayed a youthfulness of spirit that captivated everyone with whom she came in contact; in her earlier years she was just a delightful baby with an underlying strength of character which enabled her to be for Disraeli the shadow of a rock in a thirsty land during all the storm and stress of his political life.

As in the case of many beautiful and famous women legends have clustered about Mary Anne's early days, and it is even said that at one time during her youth she earned her living in humble circumstances as a milliner, but no good ground exists for this supposition, and in the light of the known facts about her it is not even plausible. She was definitely "county" on her mother's side, and in Mary Anne's time, at least, daughters and nieces of "the county" did not go out to work in hat shops.

Her birthplace was St. Sidwell's, Exeter, and it is recorded in the parish register that she was baptised Marianne, the daughter of John and Eleanor Evans of that parish, on November the 14th, 1792.

There is no discoverable reason why she should appear as Marianne in the parish register, and be known all her life as Mary Anne. Possibly the discrepancy may have arisen from the spelling, or lack of spelling, of the parish clerk. The baby was probably named after her great aunt, Miss Mary Anne Viney, of Gloucester, one of the rich members of her mother's family.

A comparison between the world into which Mary Anne was born and that of to-day shows almost incredible differences, and yet she died in 1872, sixty two years ago, so that there must be people still alive who knew her and talked with her. England, in 1792, had scarcely changed since the days of the Romans, except that the English sailed the seven seas in three-decked three-masted sailing ships and used firearms, whereas the

Romans rowed about the Mediterranean in galleys with three or more banks of rowers, fought with swords, and used catapults in place of artillery. On the other hand the Romans understood the virtues of central heating, which even at the present day the English have only just begun to admire.

Communications were no better, and possibly worse, than in the days of the Romans. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century stage-coaches had started to run, and as they travelled faster than the carts which carried the mails it was usual to make parcels of urgent letters and send them by stage-coach. Just before Mary Anne's birth, John Palmer, a theatre proprietor of Bath, started an agitation for coaches to carry the mails. He said the postboy of the period was "an idle boy without character mounted on a worn-out hack who, so far from being able to defend himself from a robber, was more likely to be in league with one." Pitt supported Palmer and the first mail coach, under armed guard, ran from Bristol to London on August the 2nd, 1784. It encountered considerable risks from highwaymen, the favourite way-laying ground being Hounslow Heath, but the system was soon extended to other roads. Not till the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened in 1830 were passenger-carrying trains usually drawn by locomotives, though on the Stockton and Darlington Railway, which opened in 1825, carriages for conveying passengers were first used, but they were drawn by horses. The rich, when travelling on the continent, took over their own coaches or travelling carriages.

The minor amenities of life in 1792 seem to have been much the same as to-day. *The Times* for November the 14th, the day on which Mary Anne was christened, seems to be missing from the file, but in the copy for November the 16th, we read that the King held a *levée* at St. James's Palace and that on the previous Tuesday (the 16th was a Friday) an account of the drawing of the Irish Lottery arrived. Three numbers won prizes of £50 each, distinctly inferior in amount from those offered to-day. The leading article mentions the disturbance of the Funds since the last news from the Netherlands, but *The Times* could not imagine Mr. Pitt's taking part in continental disputes. The leader ended by repeating that there was no cause for alarm. The phrase sounds familiar to the ears of modern newspapers readers.

There is recorded a great advance in the price of coals. Thirty years previously coal had been sold in the North at 15s. the Newcastle chaldron; it was now being sold at 16s.,

17s., and even 18s. per chaldron. (A dictionary defines a chaldron as 25½ hundredweight.)

The remaining part of the Prince of Wales's stud of horses had sold at Tattersalls on the previous Monday for £2500. Dutch bulbs were advertised even as they are to-day.

Thus, in 1792, babies were being christened and people grumbled about the price of coal and feared being entangled in continental disputes just as at the present time, but if we agree that transportation is civilisation—though Disraeli once complained about people who confused civilisation with comfort—England still remained comparatively uncivilised. The infant Mary Anne, near Exeter, lived far more remote from London in terms of transport than a modern inhabitant of the farthest north of Scotland, and it is improbable that the contemporary common people of London could have understood the speech of the common people of Exeter. The talkies and the B.B.C. deserve a certain credit for breaking down phonetic barriers between different parts of the country.

For the rest, a small girl in St. Sidwell's, Exeter, would in 1792, find herself to a great extent isolated from the rest of England, including the great world of London. For her and her family Exeter would represent the world and civilisation. All her joys, excitements, and culture would derive from Exeter. People in what must be signified by the despised word provinces have lost a great deal by the gradual and nowadays very nearly complete domination of England by London. It has been said that what Manchester thinks to-day England thinks to-morrow, but this is only a half-truth. There is no Manchester girl at this point of time who would not prefer a frock, or a permanent wave, or a beauty treatment acquired in London to one acquired in Manchester, just as there is no girl in Minnesota, but would prefer a frock, or a permanent wave, or a beauty treatment acquired in New York to one acquired in Minneapolis or Saint Paul. Similarly, no man exists in England at this time who would not prefer a London hair-cut or a London suit of clothes to a Manchester or Exeter hair-cut or suit of clothes.

In Mary Anne's baby days, local patriotism prevailed merely through limitation of transport. The bad roads, miry and semi-impassable in winter, made a journey even from Exeter to Bristol, or Bath, an undertaking of considerable magnitude, let alone a journey to London. If one wished to travel from St. Sidwell's, Exeter, to London it meant days on a coach, such accommodation as the roadside inns afforded, and the risk of being robbed by

highywaymen. One of the shortcomings of modern life is that no one ever has to take a risk, and character is only developed by taking risks.

Consequently the dream-dressmakers, milliners, dancing mistresses, theatrical performances, doctors, dentists, dances and the rest were represented by Exeter. The march of modern progress, if that is the word, has eliminated this sturdy local patriotism and this admirable local effort. A second-rate theatrical performance by an amateur dramatic society in Exeter will count for more in the Day of Judgment than a first-class projection in Exeter of a Hollywood talkie ; the works of a reputable Exeter pastrycook are of more importance socially than all the packet trade in nationally advertised products in all the rest of Exeter put together. Local enterprise in Mary Anne's time, uninterfered with by London and the North, dressed and fed and taught and amused the pretty girls, and the tough, seafaring men for which the West of England was renowned and is still renowned even in these days. When Mary Anne was a baby the West maintained its political significance, as in the time of Charles I who could defy Parliament while he had the West solidly behind him, and to this period names like Lyme Regis and Bere Regis still bear testimony.

She came into the world on the threshold of great days. George IV occupied the throne, the first gentleman in Europe who, by dint of repeating the story, persuaded himself that he had been present at the Battle of Waterloo. In 1794 when she was two years old the war against the French was in progress, in the course of which Nelson, serving in H.M.S. *Agamemnon* took part in the sieges of Bastia and Calvi, and lost an eye before Calvi. During her girlhood occurred the golden age of the British Navy under Nelson, Collingwood, and St. Vincent, while Wellington fought his memorable campaign in the Peninsula, culminating in the Peace of Paris in 1814, the year before Mary Anne's first marriage, to Colonel Wyndham Lewis. The spirit of all this entered into her at birth because she was the daughter of a naval officer. The first born, if a girl, always takes after her father, and in courage and love of adventure undoubtedly she was her father's child. Who else, left a widow at forty-six with a comfortable fortune, would have married the debt-encumbered Disraeli, twelve years younger than herself, who had achieved nothing more than his first seat in Parliament, which he owed to the influence of Mary Anne and her first husband, and several books none of which had brought him undying fame.

Few marriages have begun with fainter hopes of success, for how could the forty-seven-year-old Mary Anne hope to hold the thirty-five-year-old Disraeli, a darling of drawing-rooms, a dandy of dandies, curled and be-ringed and fascinating, dressed in the very extravagance of the mode? We can only suppose that the daring and confidence which made her father run away to sea at the age of eleven lived again in his daughter. In the case of both father and daughter they were justified triumphantly.

Mary Anne's grandparents, the Evanses, were farmers and lived in the sleepy little Devonshire village of Brampford Speke. There her father, John Evans, was born and brought up to the slow routine of a farm, spring sowing and autumn reaping, the care of big, patient farm horses and placid cows. But in 1771, when little John reached his eleventh year, there was a stirring in the air comparable to that which preceded the Great War, and vague echoes of important happenings reached even the quiet farmhouse in Brampford Speke.

In the new world the American colonies were threatening to break away from England and that of course would mean war. True, Rockingham had repealed Grenville's Stamp Act in 1766, but in 1767 new duties were imposed to give England a monopoly of American trade and these met with determined resistance on the part of the colonists. In the Old World the beginnings of the French Revolution could be discerned; the nobles enjoyed privileges without responsibility, the clergy, a rich order exempt from taxes, took most of the high offices, but even the privileged classes lacked any voice in the government because the King and his officials governed. The common people groaned under taxes and constant famine, and a little later Voltaire and Montesquieu were to give expression to the people's feelings and Rousseau was to stand forth as their prophet.

Rumours of all these matters came to little John Evans in Brampford Speke. Perhaps a soldier back from the war against the French in North America, now ended by the Treaty of Paris, sat smoking his pipe, remembering with advantages the feats he did that day in various engagements, and telling the child stories of the Army, as soldiers will. More likely still a seaman from the Royal Navy, home on leave, spun sea-yarns and left the little boy spellbound.

For whatever reason the sea called to little John until he could resist her enchantments no longer. Exeter is near the sea, and Plymouth and Devonport where he could gaze at ships of the line with sky-raking top-masts, and yards mathematically

aligned, were not far away. Devon is a county of sailors and the farm had no lure for John compared to that of the sea. Therefore at the age of eleven, he joined H.M.S. *Alarm* with the rating of captain's servant.

Some benign destiny must have decreed that little John should begin his sea-service in the *Alarm*. She carried thirty-two guns and was a crack ship, said to be have been the first copper-sheathed ship in the English Navy. More important still, in 1771, which would be the date when John boarded her for the first time, she was commanded by John Jervis, afterwards Vice-Admiral Sir John Jervis, created subsequently Earl St. Vincent in honour of his victory over the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, probably the finest disciplinarian the Navy has ever known.

By the time John was entered in her books the *Alarm* had already made history. In March, 1770, she was at Marseilles when, on the evening of the 30th in a violent gale she parted her cables and was driven on the rocks. During the night her total loss became imminent, but by great efforts on the part of the ship's company, and the assistance of the French officials, she was first secured, then got afloat, hove down, and repaired. On May 11th she was at sea again and my Lords of the Admiralty expressed their approval both publicly and privately. Captain Jervis wrote to his father, who incidentally had refused to allow his son more than twenty pounds a year when he went to sea, but "as he had not taken up any slops it was assumed he had been able to buy himself soap and clothing out of it" exultantly in these words:

"A glorious action in the midst of a war could not have been more applauded than the gallantry of the officers and men."

The *Alarm* came home in 1771. She reached Spithead in mid-May, the probable date when John joined her, the whole ship's company with their tails up on account of their seamanship at Marseilles.

Then, as a compliment from my Lords of the Admiralty, they sailed on a hurrah cruise to the Mediterranean, to attend on the Duke of Gloucester, who had been ordered to spend the winter in Italy and lived on board for the most part, leaving her only in 1772 when she sailed for England to be paid off.

Meanwhile little John served one of the most redoubtable captains in the Fleet.

John Jervis, the second son of Swynfen Jervis, barrister-at-law, was educated at a private school at Greenwich, where Swynfen

Jervis moved in 1747 on his appointment as solicitor to the Admiralty and Treasurer of Greenwich Hospital. His father intended John to be a lawyer also, but the naval atmosphere of Greenwich turned the boy's thoughts to the sea. Consequently he entered the Navy on January 4th, 1748, with the rating of able seaman in H.M.S. *Gloucester*, Captain Lord Colvill, and remained in her till June 25th, 1752, when he was transferred to H.M.S. *Severn* as midshipman, and subsequently passed his examination for lieutenant.

It is not unreasonable to assume that the inspiration of Jervis' career impelled little John, as he grew older, to follow in his captain's footsteps, and that Jervis, that grim martinet, perceiving that John had the makings of a smart officer, condescended to further the boy's ambitions.

John could not have undergone a finer apprenticeship to the sea than that which he served in the *Alarm* under Captain Jervis, in the light of that officer's subsequent record.

It was his iron discipline, maintained through the previous year, which brought his fleet to such a pitch of efficiency that fifteen English sail of the line defeated a far superior Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent, though Nelson played an important part in the victory by acting on his own initiative.

In 1797 Jervis, then Lord St. Vincent, began to suppress the threatened mutiny at the Nore and Spithead with ruthless severity. The mutiny came to its climax in May, 1798, and the *Marlborough* was reputed to be the worst ship in the fleet. One of her ringleaders was court-martialled and sentenced to death, and St. Vincent ordered him to be hanged in his own ship by his own shipmates. The captain of the *Marlborough* went aboard the flagship and protested. He said his men had sworn not to let their shipmate suffer death.

St. Vincent said:

"If you cannot command the *Marlborough* I will immediately send on board an officer who can. The man shall be hanged by his own ship's company; not a hand from any other ship in the Fleet shall touch the rope."

The *Marlborough's* captain returned to his own ship, and with exceptional precautions against an outbreak the ringleader was hanged by his own shipmates at 8 a.m. the next morning.

Of such stuff was John Jervis to whom John Evans, at the age of eleven, became captain's servant.

One year previously a delicate, ailing child of poor physique also went to sea, at the age of twelve, in H.M.S. *Raisonnable* under

the command of his uncle, Captain Suckling, R.N. The name of this boy was Horatio Nelson.

Both of them entered the Navy at its most glorious period and both eventually were to die on active service. Nelson rose rapidly through the influence of his uncle, but young John Evans rose also, not quite so rapidly, perhaps, but even more remarkably, seeing he had no influence. The Navy of the late eighteenth century may have been no more efficient than its modern counterpart, but it was certainly far more democratic, and many a smart officer climbed in through the hawsehole, like John Evans.

His little servant impressed John Jervis, the captain of H.M.S. *Alarm*, as a smart lad likely to make a good seaman later on, and John was born of sturdy farming stock, bred up to hard work on good beef and beer. As he grew older his rating became that of seaman, in which his officers thought well of him. After all why not? He had followed the sea since childhood. Old salts familiar with the ports of all the world, tattooed and hairy, as much at home on a kicking yard in a gale as in the pubs at Plymouth, taught him all they knew by precept and example and with a rope's end when requisite. The Navy caught him young and the Navy was in his blood by now.

Time passed. Some captain with an eye for a likely officer recommended John for the rank of midshipman. After all Jervis also had begun his naval career as a seaman. John's rank was confirmed. He had become an officer and his career lay open to him.

There followed years of hard experience; going away in a boat in rough seas, handling the still rougher material of which naval ratings were composed in those days, sweeping the ports in charge of a press gang to secure recruits who should man the King's fleet. He became sailor-wise to ships of the line with great armaments of a hundred and more guns arranged on three decks and capable of discharging devastating broadsides; to clean-lined swift-sailing frigates, forerunners of the modern light cruiser, built and equipped for speed, handiness of manœuvring, and sweeping the seas on special missions.

Thus in the early 1780's we find John a lieutenant R.N., a clean-limbed, clear-eyed young man with years of sea-service behind him and first-hand experience of girls in many ports, but no girl seems to have made a very deep impression on him. There doubtless his yeoman stock and his upbringing on a farm influenced him. The flighty, painted, professional love-girls who

batten on sailors would get little change out of John, inheriting as he did an eye for quality in a beast or a woman. Besides, there was his friend Thomas Munn, also of the Navy.

There must have been a David and Jonathan friendship between John Evans and Thomas Munn. They had much in common from their plain honest names onward, and they agreed on almost every subject, and particularly that wherever the exigencies of the service took them they never found women to compare with the pretty, clear-skinned, soft-voiced girls of the West Country.

Throughout the years during which John worked his way from captain's servant in the *Alarm* to the rank of lieutenant, two girls, twin sisters, named Eleanor and Bridget Viney were growing up in the West. Strictly speaking they moved in more exalted circles than those to which John's parents had access. The Viney girls belonged to a county family; a Sir James Viney figured among their relatives, and their Aunt Mary Anne Viney who lived at Gloucester seems to have been a woman of some wealth.

Eleanor and Bridget were pretty girls of great charm. In those days girls found more opportunity to develop naturally and acquire charm because the slow pace of life gave them leisure in which to think and dream, and they were not educated, in the modern sense of the word, up to such a high pitch. In all matters essential to a woman they are likely to have been better educated than modern girls ; they knew how to cook very well, and every detail of household management, they had been taught charming manners, how to dress themselves in order to create the happiest effect, how to sit, stand, and walk correctly, and how to please men. In the 1780's women had not yet forgotten that it was their business in life to make themselves attractive to men, and girls' mothers, governesses, and dancing mistresses or masters, saw to it that girls' technique in this respect should be as perfect as possible. Those lessons in standing, sitting, and walking, in how to enter a room and how to leave one gave Eleanor and Bridget and their friends confidence in themselves and enabled them to overcome the natural awkwardness of adolescence.

Like all twins they were inseparable, and as Lieutenants John Evans and Thomas Munn, R.N., were inseparable also, the four young people met on the same occasion and continued to meet afterward until they ended by falling in love.

Eleanor must have been to however small an extent nicer

than Bridget, because it was Eleanor whom John Evans loved, while Thomas Munn gave his heart to Bridget. They make a charming picture across the vista of the years, these pretty twin sisters and their good-looking sailor lovers. You can see examples of Eleanor's and Bridget's frocks in the Victoria and Albert Museum to-day, frocks with tight-fitting boned bodices coming down to a point in front, low necks, and sleeves to the elbow terminating in an edging of lace. The skirts are full, with innumerable pleats at the back, and extend to the ground in a sweeping line. The bodices defined the waist very exactly—it was in the days when women had figures—and no man of enterprise seeing a pretty girl in such a frock could help longing to put his arm round her waist.

Conversely, their lovers held a romantic appeal for Eleanor and Bridget, in the naval uniform of the day. Besides, they possessed the irresistible attraction of fighting men in a period when fighting was to be done, and of the senior service at that. Two generations of modern English women can still remember the thrill of being kissed by officers on leave from the various theatres of war.

These four met first somewhere in the middle 1780's and continued to meet because it became apparent that theirs was no passing flirtation but serious love. One imagines John Evans feeling very proud and happy. He had left home as a small child to follow the sea, won his way by sheer dogged perseverance, attained at the age of twenty-six or so the rank of lieutenant in the Royal Navy and now found himself the sweetheart of a charming, pretty girl coming of a family far more important than his own. But then, of course, Eleanor's family didn't matter because a naval officer was the equal of anyone in the land.

It may or may not have crossed the minds of John Evans and Thomas Munn that Eleanor and Bridget must in the nature of things bring with them marriage settlements. Even at a time when prize-money could be picked up every now and then, Evans at least was not rich. It is doubtful if he cared very much beyond the tip-tilted nose and beautiful eyes which Eleanor must have possessed, because so did Mary Anne, and a girl would hardly inherit a tip-tilted nose and beautiful eyes from her father.

It is much more plausible to decide that Mary Anne inherited her mother's looks and her father's character, except for the frivolous side of her. Eleanor may well have been a little frivolous

for she made later in life a second marriage almost impossible for a young woman who could not take life rather lightly.

In this love affair of Eleanor Viney's with John Evans we begin to see the queer workings of coincidence. John, judging from his surname, must have been of Welsh descent, and Mary Anne's first husband, like her mother's, was also a Welshman, Colonel Wyndham Lewis. Eleanor married for the first time at the age of twenty-three, and so did Mary Anne. Eleanor's second husband was distinctly an adventurer and from what we know of him, which is not much, Eleanor would find it necessary to keep the home going while she lived with him. Mary Anne's second husband was also an adventurer, in the most splendid sense of the word, and she too kept the home going to a certain extent after her marriage to Disraeli. Here the parallel ends because Disraeli made up to Mary Anne in love, in gratitude, and in splendour all that she gave to him. Through him she enjoyed the opportunity of meeting kings, queens, and princes, of finding herself an honoured guest at the greatest houses in England, and of knowing the innermost political secrets during some of England's most spacious days.

On September 16th, 1788, there took place a double wedding at the parish church of Charles, Plymouth, when John Evans married Eleanor Viney and Thomas Munn, Bridget Viney. Eleanor was then twenty-three and John about twenty-eight, an almost ideal difference in ages between husband and wife. It must have been a delightfully picturesque wedding of one of the most promising young officers in the Fleet, specially picked by the great St. Vincent himself, in the blue and gold of the Navy, and pretty Eleanor completely adorable in her wedding-dress with its tight-boned bodice and sweeping skirt. Apart from any contribution by the Navy, which would hardly deny them an arch of swords under which to leave the church, the wedding did not lack importance.

In a local paper of the period, the *Exeter Flying Post*, Eleanor and Bridget are noted as being agreeable young ladies with handsome fortunes. The marriage was by licence in the presence of nine witnesses, and John is described in the register as Lieutenant R.N. of this parish. The Viney element seems rather to have overshadowed the more humble Evanses, because Eleanor enjoyed the dignity of being an heiress with a formal marriage settlement.

Consequently the Vineys turned out in strength and produced extremely dignified connections as trustees of the settlement,

namely, Edward Lambert of Boyton, Wiltshire, and Ambrose Kent, D.D., of Berkley, Somerset. Ambrose Kent was, in fact, vicar of Berkley. Eleanor received no less than £5,300 from her mother, a considerable sum in those days when coal, for instance, only cost eighteen shillings a chaldron. Moreover, the deed of settlement declared that she had great expectations of being possessed of considerable other fortune from her aunt, Mary Anne Viney, of the city of Gloucester and otherwise. No wonder Eleanor christened her own little girl Mary Anne.

After their marriage John and Eleanor settled at Exeter, near John's people, and were happy. Threats of war still muttered and grumbled, and no man could predict the future of France, where revolution might mean a European conflagration, but meanwhile calm brooded over England and the sleep of a naval officer's young wife need not be disturbed by nightmares of leaping guns vomiting shot and shell from battered ships in a death-grapple with the enemy, and lieutenants, sword in hand, leading boarding parties armed with pike and cutlass.

In the winter of 1792, four years after her parents' marriage, Mary Anne was born. If John Evans loved his little daughter dearly, and how could he have helped it, his joy in her remained altogether brief, because in the following year war broke out between France and England. Sir John Jervis, once captain of the *Alarm*, now vice-admiral, commanded an English squadron operating in the West Indies, and H.M.S. *Ceres* was ordered to join that squadron with John Evans as her first lieutenant. H.M.S. *Ceres* was a frigate. She was a fifth rate of thirty-two guns, built at Liverpool by Messrs. Fearon & Webb, and launched on September 19th, 1781. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars she was used as a depot at Chatham, and was broken up there in 1830. No doubt Jervis remembered Evans as one of his best young officers and asked for him. As events turned out he was never to see Eleanor or Mary Anne again.

There is no record that John Evans became a casualty during Jervis' fleet-actions in the West Indies. Jervis left England in the autumn of 1793, and, flying his flag in H.M.S. *Boyne*, ninety-eight guns, he arrived at Barbadoes in January, 1794. The ships under his command greatly outnumbered those of the French in the West Indies, and Jervis, in co-operation with the troops under the command of General Sir Charles Grey, captured Martinique and Guadeloupe after a series of brilliant operations in March and April. John Evans died on active service, probably of malaria, which was raging in the West

Indies, leaving a widow of twenty-nine and an orphaned daughter of one and a half.

Letters of administration were granted to Eleanor on May 26th, 1794, and she inherited his estate, valued at six hundred pounds. John's career had been brief and glorious, but he lacked both the time and opportunity to leave any great provision for his family. Fortunately the Vineys were well off and the Evanses could never have lacked the solid comforts of life.

Thus Mary Anne faced the prospect of growing up without the influence and companionship of her father which would have been so invaluable to her because of the mild sex-attraction and mutual admiration which links fathers and daughters. John would never know the charm of taking out a pretty ten-year-old or fifteen-year-old daughter, and Mary Anne would never know the thrill of being taken out by a father who when she was fifteen might well have earned fame as one of Nelson's captains, and fought his ship at the Battle of Trafalgar.

But then, since he died when she was one and a half, Mary Anne could have had no memories of him. For a while at any rate she occupied the whole of her mother's thoughts, and divided her time between the shelter of her mother's home and being spoiled by her grandparents. Brampford Speke was not far away, and no doubt she had the run of the farm on which John Evans was born. There would be the excitement of the first baby chicks, the first lambs, haymaking and the harvest home. She would revel in home-made bread and home-made jam with Devonshire cream spread thick on top of it, and be given rides on the big, quiet horses, and watch the milkmaids, Devonshire girls like herself with complexions of roses and cream, milk the placid cows. Life stretched before her illimitably as it seemed, and yet the days were never long enough to contain all the exciting things there are for a child to do on a farm.

It is certain that Mary Anne thrived amazingly on her soft native air and the good food of Devonshire, because she lived until the advanced age of eighty. She died in 1872, and from 1866 onward suffered from cancer of the stomach, concealing the fact from Disraeli in order to spare his feelings while he concealed from her the fact that he knew in order to spare hers.

She was pretty and vital and charming and chattered unceasingly from sheer high spirits. The bond of affection between her and her mother never slackened, and remained just as strong to the end of Eleanor's life, for she lived to be Disraeli's mother-in-law and spent her last days with her daughter.

In the interval Eleanor introduced a certain complication into Mary Anne's life by marrying a Mr. Thomas Yate.

History is almost silent about Mr. Yate and he looms a vague and mysterious figure. He is said to have followed the calling of a master of ceremonies, a nocturnal pursuit which would leave him with time on his hands during the day. Like the musicians in modern dance bands, probably he rose and breakfasted at noon, and, since his were the days of hard drinking, attacked the meal with little appetite owing to a hang-over from the potations of the previous night.

A master of ceremonies must before all things dispose of an impressive figure. It may have been the impressiveness of Thomas Yate's appearance which captivated Eleanor, though a master of ceremonies seems a sad anti-climax in the way of husbands after one of Sir John Jervis' picked young officers, but in the thirties a woman's choice of men becomes more limited, and the memory of that day in the parish church of Charles, Plymouth, when she and her sister Bridget married John Evans and Thomas Munn had grown faint with the passing years. Eleanor wanted love, and a man about the house, and before her appeared Thomas Yate, the pink of deportment, with a courtly bow, a perfect calf for a silk stocking, magnificently cut coats, and above all an air. Queen Victoria once complained that Gladstone addressed her as though she were a public meeting, and Thomas Yate, accustomed to intone at ceremonies: "Mr. Chairman, your excellencies, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen, pray silence——" could hardly have addressed Eleanor in any other fashion, but she found him romantic and married him.

One can imagine Thomas Yate between sips of brandy and water musing not altogether platonically over his pretty stepdaughter, since intrigue entered naturally into the occasions of his profession, and he was accustomed to further at balls, routs, and other diversions, forbidden meetings between heiresses and handsome but penniless young admirers, or inform Lord A that her ladyship had retired with an indisposition when actually she was carrying on a flirtation with Sir George C. These musings in the long run came to no more than a professional and instinctive weighing up of form, because Mary Anne leaves no record of dislike for her stepfather. She confessed once that her happy disposition was due entirely to the fact that no one in all her life had ever repressed or thwarted her.

Either Thomas and Mary Anne found some common ground

for mutual esteem or else Thomas, having married slightly above himself, remained on his best behaviour where his wife and Mary Anne were concerned. In taverns among his cronies he may have relaxed the conventionality of his behaviour and spiced his conversation with discreet scandal, but at home he preserved a faint suggestion of the master of ceremonies. To begin with, at any rate, Eleanor must have marvelled at him, but Mary Anne is more likely to have thought him a funny old thing.

For the rest Mary Anne possessed a large circle of friends and relations who, as she grew older, provided her with all the social opportunities she could desire. After all, in spite of Thomas Yate, she still had the Vineys behind her. There was, for instance, Sir James in Gloucestershire, with various properties, a man of substance and influence. Born with a heart of gold, Mary Anne, after her first marriage, made up to Sir James anything he had ever done for her. Sir James, being short of ready money, desired a mortgage on one of his properties, and Colonel Wyndham Lewis, Mary Anne's husband, took it up.

On the other hand love changes and the best of us take refuge in expediency. After her marriage to Disraeli, when he too was short of ready money, Mary Anne foreclosed the mortgage on Sir James's property in order to put cash behind Disraeli's career. Blood is said to be thicker than water, but love transcends all ties of blood and kinship. In spite of the foreclosure Sir James bore Mary Anne no grudge. Probably he had been in tight corners himself and a fellow-feeling made him broad-minded. When he died he left Mary Anne a thousand pounds.

She was firmly entrenched in the West from Gloucester to Wiltshire and Wiltshire to Devonshire. Beyond that she had the Navy at Plymouth. Her mother enjoyed a reasonable income, there were balls and parties and visits to country houses, yet still the young Mary Anne did not marry.

It could not have been for lack of proposals because her portraits show her to be the most attractive creature. The secret lies between her natural light-heartedness, which would impel her to flit from man to man, innocently, but still definitely, and the spirit of the times.

It must never be forgotten that her childhood and youth coincided with a most pregnant period of English history. During her earliest years England lived under threat of invasion by the French. The Battle of Trafalgar, which took place during her thirteenth year, freed England from this threat, but the war went on and the here-to-day-and-gone-to-morrow

spirit prevailed. All those who lived through the Great War can understand the feverishness which affected everyone during her youth. In those days communications were bad, news travelled slowly, and rumours abounded. All the men of such families as Mary Anne knew would be officers in the Navy or Army, taking for their motto a short life and a merry one, because they never knew when a bullet might cut short their careers. We saw exactly the same spirit in existence between the years 1914 and 1918.

In her thirteenth year Wellington returned from India, and when she was fifteen was commanding an expedition to expel the French from Lisbon, which resulted in the defeat of Junot at Vimiera and Rolica. Wellington was recalled, and Sir John Moore, the finest trainer of troops the Army ever produced, made a sortie from Portugal to divert Napoleon from Andalusia, and then began his celebrated retreat to Corunna, fighting as he retired, and falling in the battle which covered the embarkation of the English.

Wellington returned with an expeditionary force, invaded Spain and won the Battle of Talavera. Mary Anne was seventeen then, old enough to take part in the rejoicings and be kissed by ecstatic young officers envying Wellington's expeditionary force its glory. Wellington retired before Masséna and dug himself in at the lines of Torres Vedras, near Lisbon. Subsequently he defeated Masséna at Fuentes d'Onor in 1811. Mary Anne was nineteen then, and it is certain that she went to a victory dance.

Wellington proceeded to the victories of Badajoz and Salamanca, and occupied Madrid. Finally after reverses he prevented Joseph Bonaparte from crossing the Ebro, while Napoleon fought for his life in Germany, and defeated Jourdan at Vittoria on June 21st, 1813, thus celebrating the year in which Mary Anne became twenty-one. He went on to invade France, and the Peace of Paris was signed in 1814, just one hundred years before the outbreak of the Great War.

No girl of spirit and imagination, especially one whose father had won the favourable notice of St. Vincent, who trained the navy Nelson was to lead to victory at Trafalgar, could live through times like those without drawing inspiration from stirring events and acquiring gaiety, courage, and a certain recklessness of consequences. She must have approximated spiritually to the generation of girls who grew up between 1914 and 1918 with death and glory, tragedy and triumph all around

them ; the girl-friends of men already dead who, in the brief interval before death, danced with them and loved them.

It is understandable that in the circumstances Mary Anne delayed marriage until she was twenty-three, and then married a man of wealth and importance twelve years older than herself. Her wedding took place in the year of Waterloo, when England could draw breath and feel safe for the first time since 1793. The terror of the Hundred Days was over; Napoleon's star had set finally and for ever at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18th, 1815. Mary Anne was married on December 22nd of the same year which ushered in a long period of peace and ultimate prosperity.

According to a miniature of her by Rochard few more charming girls could have existed in her day. She is shown sitting up properly in a high-backed chair. She wears a frock which leaves her shoulders completely bare and has large leg-of-mutton sleeves. Her bare shoulders slope considerably, but this may be due to a convention followed by the painters of the period. She has an oval face with a pointed chin and the most intriguing mouth, but it is her nose which gives her face its character.

Mary Anne's nose was just long enough to suggest a pleasantly inquisitive nature but no more, and deliciously tip-tilted. Her eyes were large, expressive, and inquiring, with a discreetly come-hither motive in their glance. She wore her hair parted in the middle with ringlets at either side which concealed her ears and accentuated the oval of her face. From the invisible ears depend ear-rings that intensify the pointedness of her chin and help to give her whole face a divine note of interrogation.

In this portrait the right hand is resting on her knee, a slender, beautiful hand adorned with two rings, one on the little finger and one on the third.

Her whole pose and expression give the lie completely to such writers as dismiss her contemptuously for a feather-headed little fool who became in her middle and old age so fantastically enamoured of Disraeli that the spectacle of her excessive admiration was frankly ridiculous. Few women have been less foolish than Mary Anne. She had her affectations, like many of her sex, and an intelligent student of her character can very well imagine her exaggerating them deliberately on occasion for the benefit of a slow-witted audience, who really believed that her occasionally extravagant phrases and what appeared to be social blunders were involuntary instead of intentional.

If any evidence of her supreme common sense is necessary

it exists in her methodically-kept housekeeping accounts which are still preserved. Anyone who doubts her charm, tact, and knowledge of human nature has only to reflect that she made two happy marriages, one with a temperamental Celt inclined like all his race to melancholy and brooding, the other with Disraeli, than whom no more highly-strung individual figures in the pages of history. Both these men loved her dearly; Wyndham Lewis when he died left her a fortune, with no barring clause in his will against re-marriage, and Disraeli payed her the tribute of a lifelong devotion. So sensitive was he with regard to her that on one occasion at a country house when some gentleman with more impetuosity than good manners "quizzed" Mary Anne at the dinner-table, Disraeli insisted on terminating their visit and leaving the house at the earliest moment possible.

Such was the girl with whom Colonel Wyndham Lewis fell in love in 1815, the year of Waterloo.

She met him first at Clifton, at a ball given by the Vernon-Grahams. At that period the English had not cultivated the sea-side habit and in the eighteenth century Brighton was still a fishing village, though George IV had built there an architectural horror known as the Pavillion, which still celebrates his complete lack of taste in these matters, as a place of residence. Beauty, rank, and fashion resorted to inland spas for health and amusement, as did the Romans than whom none esteemed more the waters of Bath which they called *Aquae Solis*. Beau Nash had revived its glories while master of ceremonies in the early 1700's, and the vogue remained in Mary Anne's day. Clifton was slightly less fashionable than of old at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the spa at Hotwells remained a formidable competitor of Bath. While staying there she could be certain of an amusing life with dances, assemblies, and plenty of admirers.

General Vernon-Graham seems singularly fitted to have been the instrument of Providence in bringing Mary Anne and Wyndham Lewis together. The General's home was at Hilton Park, Staffordshire. Originally plain Vernon, he took in 1814 the extra name of Graham, and the point of interest about him in connection with Mary Anne's first marriage is that his mother came from Cardiff, so that Wyndham Lewis may have been a friend of theirs. Thus, since he too was at Clifton, naturally the General would invite him to the ball, at which he encountered his fate in the shape of the delicious Mary Anne.

The arrival of Wyndham Lewis on the scene takes us back deeply into the history of Wales. The Wyndham Lewises were some of the most important people in Glamorganshire, and Glamorganshire is the most important county in Wales. It has vast mineral wealth and prosperous seaports like Cardiff and Swansea. The mineral wealth of Glamorganshire had made the Wyndham Lewises what they were because they acquired their wealth from coal.

Apart from coal they derived importance from land, very necessary at a period when no one, not even a landowner, enjoyed much consideration. Did not one of the Bentincks exclaim passionately that he had in Disraeli the best man for the Party leader, but the Party would not hear of him because he was not a landed gentleman, and so before the Party accepted his leadership a landed gentleman he had to be?

No Party could have objected to Wyndham Lewis' leadership, supposing his brains had entitled him to lead a Party, on the score that he was a landless man. In the middle of the eighteenth century the Lewises possessed the estates of Newhouse and Greenmeadow, close to Cardiff. The Rev. William Lewis occupied Newhouse and his brother Greenmeadow. Wyndham Lewis was the third son of the Rev. William, and there is a slight conflict of evidence as to how Wyndham came into possession of Greenmeadow. Some say he inherited the place, but it seems more likely that Greenmeadow would have descended to his elder brother, Henry. But Henry lived on another estate called Park, and possibly Wyndham rented Greenmeadow from Henry.

In any case at Greenmeadow Wyndham lived. He made extensive alterations and christened the house Pantgwynlais Castle, which according to one writer is a translation of Greenmeadow into Welsh. A modern authority casts doubt upon this statement and asserts that nothing in the word Pantgwynlais has any green significance.

Apart from his Welsh estate Wyndham Lewis had many more claims to importance, and various honorifics. He was for example a magistrate, Deputy-Lieutenant of Glamorganshire, and a major in the Militia. He owned a fine house in London, No. 1 Grosvenor Gate, which is now No. 29 Park Lane. Disraeli lived there for years after his marriage to Mary Anne, and from a window in the house she first saw him, while she was still Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, driving in the Park with a lady, for the house stands opposite the Grosvenor Gate and has a view over the Park.

It was this first glimpse which decided her on making an opportunity to meet him.

Besides all this the excellent Wyndham had been admitted to Lincoln's Inn during the year 1812, though he was not called to the Bar till 1819, and once called never practised so far as can be discovered.

According to a portrait, in appearance he exemplified the respectful earnestness of the typical back-bencher, acquired no doubt from serious devotion to politics and public work. At the time of meeting Mary Anne he was thirty-five, exactly twelve years her senior, whereas Disraeli was twelve years her junior. Wyndham Lewis had a slightly sad, thoughtful face with a long nose and the expression of a rather kind horse. His hair is cut in the haphazard manner of the period as though the operation had been performed with a knife and fork. The Duke of Wellington's hair displayed the same disenchanted appearance, and hair-cutting does not seem to have impressed early nineteenth-century gentlemen as of much importance, because Mary Anne always cut Disraeli's hair, and she cannot have known very much about hair-cutting. Incidentally she never threw away so much as one hair of what she cut, and after her death Disraeli found the clippings of thirty years carefully preserved.

As to clothes Wyndham Lewis affected a quiet richness in keeping with his station. A mystery which will never be explained is how a man who wore such beautifully-cut coats and restrained waistcoats ever became a friend of Disraeli, who in his younger days at any rate had a passion for walking about in what almost amounted to fancy dress.

It is a tribute to the undying charm of Mary Anne at the age of twenty-three that Wyndham Lewis fell in love with her. At thirty-five, with his coal-mines and his castle, his actual or prospective Deputy-Lieutenancy (Disraeli once asked for and obtained a Deputy-Lieutenancy because he wished to visit high circles in Germany and thought he would look better in a red coat; and then having attained the rank and the uniform he was prevented from going to Germany), his barristership at law, his town house, his wealth, and political prospects, could not be described as other than an excellent catch. Many young ladies must have angled for him, and were there not the maidens of Wales: tall, with hair the colour of molten copper, long limbs, and milk-white skins, their tawny eyes pools of mystery, their atmosphere one of perpetual seductiveness? But perhaps Wyndham knew too well the charm of Welsh maidens, or, being

Welsh himself, the charm failed to compel. He succumbed instead to Mary Anne, born in the West, where the girls are more loving than anywhere else in England, but then Wales, of course, is not in England as most English people imagine.

Mary Anne must have looked a perfectly adorable bride. In 1815 girls were wearing very high-waisted frocks. There is a wedding dress of the period in the Victoria and Albert Museum which would have suited her most admirably. It has an underdress of satin, an over-dress of silk crêpe embroidered with silver thread, and a transparent shoulder cape so ethereal that it takes one's breath away. The shoes—little square-toed shoes like ballet-shoes—and garters are of satin embroidered with silver thread to match.

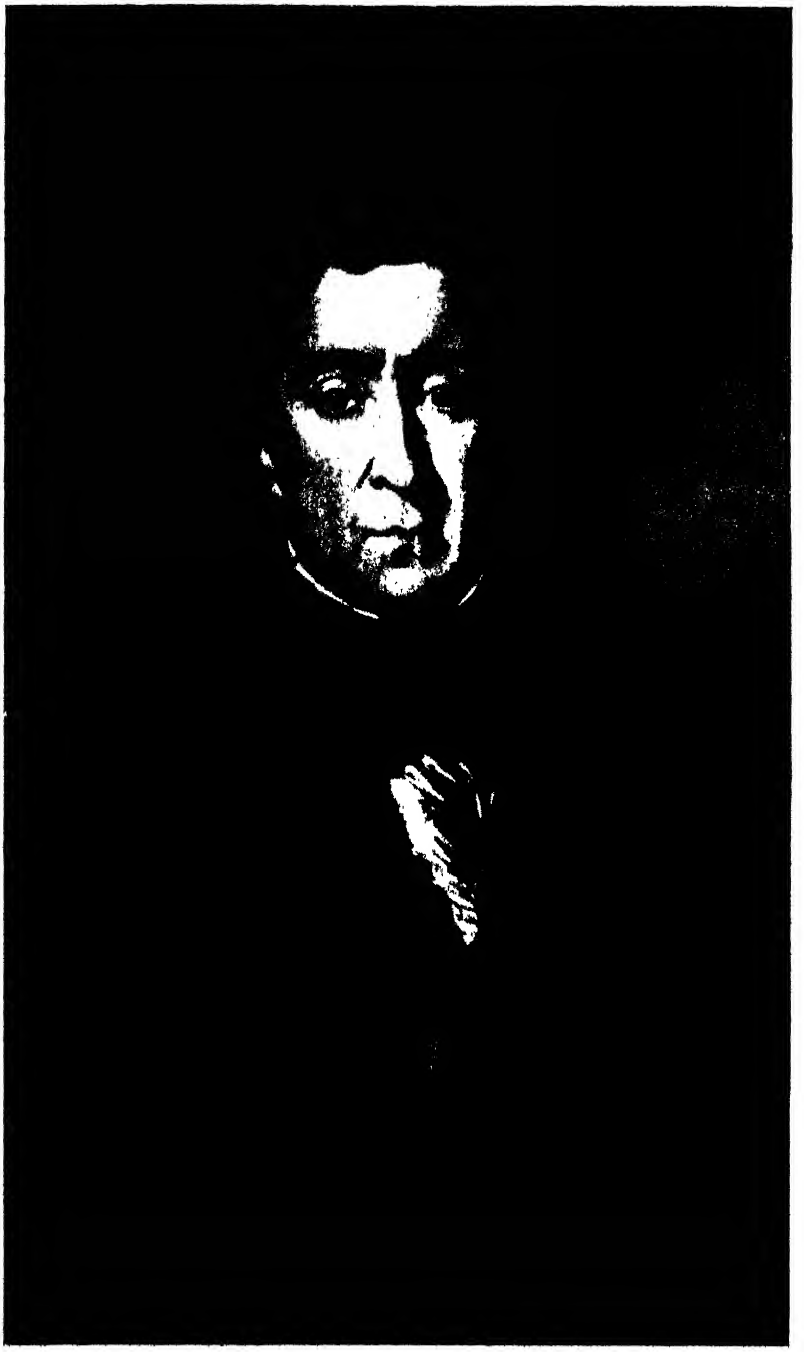
The wedding took place at the parish church of Clifton on December 22nd, 1815, by licence, and the witnesses were James Viney and A. Yates. That would be Sir James, no doubt, whom Wyndham Lewis subsequently lent money on a mortgage which Mary Anne foreclosed for love of Disraeli. "A. Yates" is difficult to determine. Mary Anne's stepfather was T. Yate, and her mother E. Yate. One can only suppose that there were other Yates in the family or that T. Yate had a second initial, A, which he used on this occasion and added an "s" to his surname. Possibly, as master of ceremonies at Clifton, he might have lent dignity to the proceedings. Beau Nash, master of ceremonies at Bath in his day, wielded despotic power. Royalty considered Beau Brummell their superior. Even General Vernon-Graham need not have sniffed at Thomas Yate (or Yates) if at Clifton in 1815 he enjoyed the zenith of his power as M.C.

The *Bristol Times and Mirror* had a notice:

> "Friday at Clifton, Wyndham Lewis, Esq., of Greenmeadow, near Cardiff, to Mary Anne, only daughter of the late John Evans, Esq., of Brampford Speke, Devon."

As for what was going on in the great world on Mary Anne's wedding day, *The Times* of that date advertised a free admission for life to Drury Lane Theatre at £50. It sounds expensive unless one was very young. The Court of Governors of the Bank of England declared the usual half-yearly dividend of five per cent. News came from Paris that while the French papers said instructions had been given for Marshal Ney's trial, private letters indicated that he had escaped.

Regardless of the fate of Marshal Ney, Wyndham Lewis bore



WYNDHAM LEWIS, ESQ., M.P.

From a plate dedicated to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis after his death (in 1838) by the constituents of the Borough of Maidstone, for which he sat, "in testimony of their affectionate esteem [illegible]"

Mary Anne off to the fastnesses of Wales, where the old gods still linger in the remote hills and valleys, and secrets of the earth unknown to prosaic English people are revealed to the dreamy Celt.

From all accounts Mary Anne got on extremely well with the dreamy Celts. She is reported to have been popular and gay in Cardiff, invited to balls, parties, routs, assemblies and the houses of the great and powerful on all sides. Reading between the lines, however, we seem to perceive that Mary Anne never really liked her husband's native country and his co-nationals. This is hardly surprising; a certain cruelty underlies Wales and the Welsh, that Celtic cruelty most sinister and deadly. Mary Anne came from the smiling county of Devon to the sombre Druidical theocracy of Wales, and her sunny temperament encountered a strange chill. It is notorious that the people of Devonshire dislike the Cornish, who likewise are Celts. In spite of her round of gaiety and outward cheerfulness it is practically certain that Wales bored Mary Anne. In after life, when on the death of Wyndham she had to visit Wales in order to wind up his affairs, she wrote to Disraeli that she could not put up with her surroundings and proposed to return.

Disraeli replied urging her to endure for a while so as to secure her own interests, but she was back in London three weeks afterward.

Not long after her marriage to Wyndham we find him toying with the idea of entering politics, and it is not at all unlikely that Mary Anne put the idea into his head. She once declared that she hated politics, and she may have hated them in the abstract, but she must have loved the excitement, the personalities, the intrigue, bribery, and corruption that distinguished elections in the early nineteenth century, with beer flowing like water and votes bought openly at so much a vote. A noble lord of the period remarked in this connection:

"Can one blame a coppersmith with six children if he accepts £600 for his vote?"

Years later, Mary Anne, in a letter to Sir Robert Peel begging him to reward Disraeli with some office, mentions that £40,000 was spent at Maidstone for election purposes on her influence alone. In spite of this Peel turned a deaf ear.

Certainly she was one of the most charming and successful canvassers who ever wheedled and cajoled a reluctant elector, so much so in fact, that when Disraeli sat for Shrewsbury one of his supporters in that town declared that having a wife like Mary

Anne was quite a good enough excuse to have him represent them in Parliament.

Thus when in time she became tired of Cardiff society it cannot have escaped Mary Anne's quick intelligence that with Wyndham in Parliament residence in London for a great part of the year would become essential, and there waiting for occupation stood his spacious house at 1 Grosvenor Gate, overlooking the Park. Within its walls she could gather together all the leading figures of the social and political worlds, so infinitely more attractive than Welsh country squires and Cardiff business magnates.

The opportunity arrived in 1820, when Wyndham was forty, Mary Anne twenty-eight, and Disraeli, at the age of sixteen, on the point of leaving school. Cardiff at that time belonged for all intents and purposes to the Marquess of Bute and the Stuart family, and Lord William Crichton Stuart sat for Cardiff at Westminster. In 1820 a general election took place and for some reason Lord William Crichton Stuart did not wish to stand. Perhaps Parliament bored him and interfered with his hunting and shooting.

Thereupon Wyndham Lewis was chosen as the Tory candidate and Mary Anne enjoyed her first experience of canvassing. Little did she realise as she smiled on the doorsteps of Cardiff cottages and kissed the Welsh babies in the approved manner how much more canvassing would fall to her lot as the years rolled on. It may have been due partly to her attraction, but chiefly no doubt to the strangle-hold of the Butes and Stuarts on Cardiff that Wyndham Lewis, with four hundred and seventy-five votes, defeated E. Ludlow, a Whig, who only polled two hundred and forty-five votes.

The Whigs and Tories of this period correspond to modern Liberals and Conservatives. "Whigs" is an abbreviation of "Whigamores," a term applied originally to the Covenanters of South-west Scotland. "Tory" is derived from an Irish word meaning to pursue for the sake of robbery. Whigs were modified successors of the Roundheads of the Civil War, and Tories of the Cavaliers. After the Reform Act of 1832 the term Conservative replaced that of Tory, as suggesting wisdom and moderation instead of violence and opposition. The Whigs then adopted the name of Liberals which had a spacious significance.

The old Tory Party was broken up by Free Trade, and Disraeli welded together the Conservative Party under his own leadership. Palmerston had most to do with forming the Liberal

Party out of the old Whig aristocracy, Radicals of various types, and certain followers of Sir Robet Peel.

Wyndham Lewis only represented Cardiff for some five years because in 1826 Lord William Crichton Stuart, tired possibly of his hunting and shooting or whatever it was, wanted his seat back again. Quite naturally, given his territorial importance, he found himself returned unopposed, and Wyndham, whom the political virus had inoculated beyond all hope, just as the drawing-rooms of Mayfair had captivated Mary Anne, fell back on Aldeburgh, in Suffolk.

Unfortunately Aldeburgh was not much to fall back upon, having been nearly washed away by the sea, so that it found itself extinguished as a constituency by the Reform Act of 1832. Thereupon Wyndham Lewis turned his attention to Maidstone. Alas, Maidstone sent two Whigs to Parliament and they stood again in 1832, and Wyndham, a Tory, was defeated by forty-eight votes. This, incidentally, is the only election with which Mary Anne was connected that she ever lost.

Still the Tories of Maidstone gave him a great breakfast, and some magnificent plate for his pains, and his wooing of Maidstone was to end in triumphant possession because he stood again in 1835, headed the poll, and represented Maidstone till he died.

In spite of his bad luck at Maidstone the year 1832 stands out as the red-letter year in Wyndham Lewis' life, for in that year through the influence of Mary Anne he first met Disraeli, who was fighting and losing his first election campaign at Wycombe. It is a pathetic fact that Wyndham Lewis, for all his coal-mines and his Deputy-Lieutenancy, and his political ambitions, is only remembered to-day on account of his association with Mary Anne and Disraeli.

The story goes that Mary Anne, looking from the window of her drawing-room at 1 Grosvenor Gate, saw Disraeli, who had just returned from a tour of the East, driving in the Park with a lady. At that time he was twenty-eight, strikingly handsome, the dandy of dandies, the darling of drawing-rooms, and already known as a fashionable novelist. Mary Anne saw and her curiosity was aroused. Instantly she began to lay her plans in order to meet him.

On taking thought the matter became profoundly simple. Rosina Bulwer, the wife of Lytton Bulwer, also a successful young novelist, also a dandy, was Mary Anne's great friend. Lytton Bulwer and Disraeli were inseparable. What more

simple than for Rosina to ask Mary Anne and Disraeli to the same party? Rosina consented though her interest lay in dogs rather than people, so much so in fact that she called her husband "Pups" and he called her "Poodle." Still, Mary Anne was her friend, and the Wyndham Lewises were rich and the Bulwers poor, though in some strange fashion the secret of which has been lost, Bulwer, who lived on what he made as novelist, kept in Hertford Street an establishment of some splendour.

Hence Disraeli could write to his sister Sarah on April 28th, 1832, that the soirée at Bulwer's on the previous evening was really brilliant, and that he was introduced by particular desire to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a prettly little woman, a flirt and a rattle. She was gifted with a volubility he should think unequalled. She said she liked silent, melancholy men—and what man more melancholy of appearance, did he wish, than Disraeli with his jet-black curls and extreme pallor? He answered that he had no doubt of it.

Thus casually occurred the historic first meeting of Mary Anne with her second husband, one of the most brilliant statesmen in history, who deserves a chapter to himself.

II

DISRAELI

DISRAELI'S character is epitomised in this extract from a speech made to his constituents at Shrewsbury in August, 1844:

> "There is no doubt, gentlemen, that all men who offer themselves as candidates for public favour have motives of some sort. I candidly acknowledge that I have, and I will tell you what they are: I love fame; I love public reputation; I love to live in the eyes of the country; and it is a glorious thing for a man to do who has had my difficulties to contend against."

How he loved these things, and how colossal were his difficulties!

One saw in the conventional statesman of his day a Christian landed gentleman educated at a public school and Oxford or Cambridge. Disraeli, born neither a Christian nor landed, was educated at more or less obscure private schools. The landed gentlemen never needed even to think of money, whereas from his youth to his advanced middle life Disraeli found himself encumbered by debts and the prey of moneylenders.

He was born on December 21st, 1804, at 6 King's Road, Bedford Row, London, which is now 22 Theobald's Road. He had an elder sister, Sarah, the "Sa" to whom he addressed his immense correspondence with her, born in 1802, his great friend and confidante up to the time of her death on December 19th, 1859.

Modern psychologists would probably decide that he suffered at any rate during the early part of his life, and probably throughout the whole of it, from an inferiority complex. This explains his poses, his arrogance on occasion, his fantastic manner of dressing as a young man, the grandiose style of his writing and oratory. It was he who coined the celebrated phrase, which he applied to Gladstone: "A sophisticated rhetorician, inebriated

with the exuberance of his own verbosity," but the phrase is equally applicable to himself in many instances.

It is in keeping with his temperament that he concocted a picturesque story of his ancestry to bring it into harmony with his ambitions and achievements. Thus he writes in a memoir of his father, Isaac Disraeli, which introduces the collected edition of his works published in 1849:

"My grandfather, who became an English denizen in 1748, was an Italian descendant of one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century, and who found a refuge in the more tolerant territories of the Venetian Republic. His ancestors had dropped their Gothic surname on their settlement on the terra firma, and, grateful to the God of Jacob, who had sustained them through unheard-of perils, they assumed the name of Disraeli, a name never borne before or since by any other family, in order that their race might be for ever recognised. Undisturbed and unmolested they flourished as merchants for more than two centuries under the protection of the lion of St. Mark, which was but just, as the patron Saint of the Republic was himself a child of Israel. But towards the middle of the eighteenth century the altered circumstances of England, favourable, as it was then supposed, to commerce and religious liberty, attracted the attention of my great-grandfather to this island, and he resolved that the youngest of his two sons, Benjamin, the son of his right hand, should settle in a country where the dynasty seemed at length established through the recent failure of Prince Charles Edward, and where public opinion appeared definitely adverse to persecution of creed and conscience.

"The Jewish families who were then settled in England were few, though, from their wealth and other circumstances, they were far from unimportant. They were all of them Sephardim—that is to say, Children of Israel, who had never quitted the shores of the Midland Ocean until Torquemada had driven them from their pleasant residences and rich estates in Arragon, and Andalusia, and Portugal, to seek greater blessings even than a clear atmosphere and a glowing sun, amid the marshes of Holland and the fogs of Britain. Most of these families, who held themselves aloof from the Hebrews of Northern Europe, then only occasionally stealing

into England, as from an inferior caste, and whose synagogue was reserved only for the Sephardim, are now extinct ; while the branch of the great family, which, notwithstanding their own sufferings from prejudice, they had the hardihood to look down upon, have achieved an amount of wealth and consideration which the Sephardim, even with the patronage of Mr. Pelham, never could have contemplated. Nevertheless, at the time when my grandfather settled in England, and when Mr. Pelham, who was very favourable to the Jews, was Prime Minister, there might be found, among other Jewish families settled in this country, the Villa Reals, who brought wealth to these shores almost as great as their name, though that is the second in Portugal, and who have twice allied themselves with the English aristocracy, the Medinas, the Laras—who were our kinsmen—and the Mendez da Costas, who, I believe, still exist."

It is important to remember the Mendez da Costas, because they crop up again in the association of the Disraelis, towards the end of Mary Anne's life, with Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

"Whether it were that my grandfather, on his arrival, was not encouraged by those to whom he had a right to look up . . . I know not; but certainly he appears never to have cordially or intimately mixed with his community. This tendency to alienation was, no doubt, subsequently encouraged by his marriage, which took place in 1765. My grandmother, the beautiful daughter of a family who had suffered from persecution, had imbibed that dislike for her race which the vain are too apt to adopt when they find that they are born to public contempt. . . . Seventeen years, however, elapsed before my grandfather entered into this union, and during that interval he had not been idle. He was only eighteen when he commenced his career and when a great responsibility devolved upon him. He was not unequal to it. He was a man of great character; sanguine, courageous, speculative, and fortunate; with a temper which no disappointment could disturb, and a brain, amid reverses, full of resource. He made his fortune in the midway of life, and settled near Enfield, where he formed an Italian garden, entertained his friends, played whist with Sir Horace Mann, who was his great acquaintance, and who had known his brother at Venice as a banker, ate macaroni which was dressed by the Venetian Consul, sang canzonettas, and notwithstanding a wife who

never pardoned him for his name, and a son who disappointed all his plans, and who to the last hour of his life was an enigma to him, lived till he was nearly ninety, and then died in 1817 in the full enjoyment of prolonged existence."

All this makes a spacious background for Disraeli's career, but it amounts largely to picturesque embroidery of the facts. Benjamin Disraeli, the grandfather, came to England not from Venice, but from Cento, in Ferrara, and Benjamin the elder did not spell his name D'Israeli until he reached England. (Disraeli gave up the apostrophe when he was eighteen.) Benjamin's father was known as Isaac Israeli, and Israeli is Arabic for an Israelite. In Arabic, or languages derived partly from Arabic, is is customary to add an "i" to foreign words for which the language has no equivalent. Thus in the East African Campaign during the Great War the Germans were called Germani in Kiswahili, the chief local native language, which has many associations with Arabic.

Grandfather Benjamin began life in this country in an Anglo-Italian business house, and later set up on his own account. He had some unlucky experiences in speculation though he afterwards became a member of the Stock Exchange, but the turning-point in his career seems to have been his marriage to his second wife, Sarah, who really did inherit the blood of the Villa Reals.

Sarah brought money into the family and in due time Benjamin prospered so well that when he died he left an estate valued at £35,000. Benjamin and Sarah had an only son, Isaac, born in 1766, who was the father of Mary Anne's second husband.

Isaac D'Israeli is a most charming character whom everyone loved except possibly his wife, since in his later married life he lived as a complete recluse. When a boy Isaac was poetic and passionate, a bookworm and a solitary. His mother exasperated him and his father placated him with presents. Disreali records that once when Isaac ran away from home his father found him lying on a tombstone in Hackney Churchyard, kissed him, and gave him a pony.

Isaac, having enough money to live on, adopted a literary career, and it is from him that Disraeli inherited his literary gifts. Isaac's best known work is his *Curiosities of Literature*, the first volume of which he published at the age of twenty-five. He married Maria Basevi in 1802, but she had little influence on Disraeli, who relied on his father for sympathy and admiration even if Isaac never really understood him. The greatest tribute

to Isaac's delightful personality is that Mary Anne loved him, an affection he returned, as a mark of which he left her his collection of prints when he died old and blind. His chief importance in history is his influence on Disraeli, and the fact that he came to the rescue in some of his brilliant son's recurring financial crises.

The son has left us this picture of Isaac:

> "He was fair, with a Bourbon nose, and brown eyes of extraordinary beauty and lustre. He wore a small black velvet cap, but his white hair latterly touched his shoulders in curls almost as flowing as in his boyhood. His extremities were delicate and well-formed, and his leg, at his last hour, as shapely as in his youth, which showed the vigour of his frame. Latterly he had become corpulent. He did not excel in conversation, though in his family circle he was garrulous. Everything interested him, and blind and eighty-two he was still as susceptible as a child. One of his last acts was to compose some verses of gay gratitude to his daughter-in-law (Mary Anne) who was his London correspondent, and to whose lively pen he was indebted for constant amusement. . . . His feelings, though always amiable, were not painfully deep, and amid joy or sorrow the philosophic vein was ever evident. . . . One of his few infirmities was rather a deficiency of self-esteem."

Here in the last sentence we may find perhaps an explanation of the inferiority complex which seems to underly all Disraeli's superficial boastfulness and sartorial gasconnades.

When Disraeli was about six years old he was sent to a select school kept by a Miss Roper in Islington. He went on from there to a second school at Blackheath, kept by the Rev. John Potticany. No particularly strict views as to religion could have been maintained there, for Disraeli was not the only Jew among the scholars. Of his schooldays little is known, though the schooldays of the heroes in his novels *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming* are supposed to be autobiographical. At the age of fourteen he was very ill, to the alarm of his grandfather, and we find him a victim periodically to mysterious illnesses throughout the course of his life.

Three months later the grandfather died and Isaac, now better off, moved to 6 Bloomsbury Square, and remained there for twelve years. During his tenancy of this house a most important event occurred in the life of Disraeli, failing which

his political career might never have been achieved, on account of his religion. For some years Isaac had not lived on good terms with the elders of his synagogue, and in 1816 he resigned from the congregation. Isaac remained neither Jew nor Christian, but a friend of the family prevailed on him to let the children be baptised. Thus Disraeli became a member of the established church and no religious difficulties prevented him thereafter from attaining the highest office in the State.

Shortly afterwards he attended a school in Epping Forest, kept by the Rev. Eli Cogan, a Unitarian minister. He stayed there four years and declares that when he left he could have gone to the university without being crammed by a private tutor. He had read widely in the Greek classics and in Latin a great deal of Cicero, Cæsar, and Livy, and all Virgil and Horace. He seems to have left the school at Epping Forest at the age of sixteen, and read on his own account for another year. At seventeen he was articled to a firm of solicitors, Messrs. Swain, Stevens, Maples, Pearse & Hunt in Frederick's Place, Old Jewry, a proceeding which his father regarded with the greatest enthusiasm, though Disraeli already had ambitions to enter Parliament. He acted as secretary to one of the partners; he says that the partner's correspondence was as extensive as a minister's, and the clients were all men of great importance.

At this time Mary Anne, aged twenty-nine, had been married to Wyndham Lewis for six years.

Isaac, of course, was indulging in the rosy dreams of all parents of sons. He had placed Benjamin with the second most important firm of solicitors in the City, the head of which was his great friend. The boy might now be regarded as settled in life, and Isaac could spend laborious days in the British Museum and his library, collecting more snippets for more *Curiosities of Literature* untroubled by anxiety about Ben. Isaac was a kind of literary magpie and left a vast collection of disconnected jottings. Moreover, the head of the firm had a daughter, and what more natural than that a happy alliance might wed Ben to the firm in more senses than one? She married someone else, became the mother of two generals, and Disraeli later on made one a minister, having in the interval refused to continue a legal career. So much for the rosy dreams of parents.

Meanwhile he divided his life between reading the Greek and Latin classics at home and appearing daily at the office in Frederick's Place. As a diversion he dined with his father at the house of John Murray, the publisher. There he met

various literary persons, including Tom Moore, a sort of poet, who had returned from the Continent and revealed personal details about Byron. The conversation at Murray's dinners furnished some of the dialogue for Disraeli's novel *Vivian Grey*, and the connection with Murray is important because much comes of it later. In the meantime Disraeli, an exuberant youth, became slightly abounding. We read of him wearing a black velvet suit with ruffles and black stockings with red clox. He had begun already to have an eye for ladies, but his devotion to his sister Sarah exerted a steadying influence. About this time he made his first attempt at writing, which came to nothing.

The business of the law was not going very well, and during the period of his apprenticeship in Frederick's Place, Disraeli became the victim of one of his recurring fits of illness. The result was a six weeks' holiday in Europe, accompanied by his father and a young man named Meredith, later to become Sarah's fiancé. This was her fatal love affair because Meredith died, and with his death her love-life ended.

There is not the faintest sign of ill-health in Disraeli's letters to Sarah from the Continent, that kind understanding Sarah whose eternal lot it was to sit at home, receive her brother's overflowing letters and reply in suitably admiring terms. Something in Disraeli's nature made the admiration of a woman an absolute necessity. This admiration he never lacked: Sarah, Lady Blessington, Sara Austen, the beautiful Sheridans, Mary Anne, Mrs. Brydges Willyams, and a dozen others all yielded it to him heaped up, shaken together, pressed down, and running over. The unwilling reflection arises that women love a bounder, and Disraeli, on the least admirable side of his nature, the flamboyant side, was always slightly a bounder. But then, he came as a relief to many lovely ladies after the strong silent Englishmen of his day; even Queen Victoria, her heart ostentatiously broken by the untimely decease of the Prince Consort, basked in the plainly expressed admiration of Mr. Disraeli. He sent her a novel of his own composing, and she sent him her literary ewe lamb: *Leaves from a Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*. She also sent him camellias and primroses from Osborne. The secret of his appeal to women was that Disraeli never lacked kindness towards them. He addressed them with a slightly Eastern extravagance, and there is no woman however exalted, but loves to hear nice things said about her in discreet worshipful and convincing language by a distinguished man.

Disraeli writes to the sympathetic Sarah from Bruges that Isaac was frisky with mulled claret on landing, and on the strength of it the lion of Ostend. For Bruges he has the greatest admiration, and here Isaac is in fine racy spirits. Ghent is too marvellous, and there he encounters a meal of roast joint, veal chops with rich sauce, roast pigeons, peas, dessert, salad, bread, and beer, all for six francs. At Brussels again he rhapsodises over food with the enthusiasm of a growing boy; the oysters are as small as shrimps and delicately sweet. Isaac comes out in a black stock.

At Antwerp he celebrates a *vol-au-vent* of pigeons. At Mainz he drinks Hochheimer, Johannesberg, Rudesheimer, and Assmannshauser. It is true there is also a great deal about pictures and architecture. The indisposition seems quite to have passed away. One imagines Sarah in Bloomsbury Square, with no roast pigeons, no Belgian oysters, no Assmannshauser, marvelling at the doings of her brilliant brother and reflecting how wonderful it was to be a man.

At Darmstadt he lauds the opera, and the Grand Duke in grand military uniform standing up and beating time. At Coblenz the dinners if possible improve, partridges abound, and the roebuck is superb.

Voyaging down the Rhine he determined he would not become a lawyer.

Having made this great decision the question to be answered on his arrival in England was what should he be? Temporarily, at any rate, he proceeded to follow in grandfather Benjamin's footsteps and speculate on the Stock Exchange. Alas, family history repeated itself, and he found no more success than grandfather Benjamin before he married Sarah, who brought money into the family. At the office of Messrs. Swain, Stevens, Maples, Pearse, & Hunt, solicitors, Disraeli had met a young man named Evans, and here the Welsh *motif* reappears, for what name could possibly be more Welsh than Evans? More curious still it is identical with Mary Anne's maiden name. The two became very good friends.

That happened to be an era of speculation in South American mines, and young Mr. Evans and young Mr. Disraeli fixed their eyes and their attention on this land of promise with all the optimism of youth. Why save with painful slowness when all the world was engaged in a conspiracy to get rich quickly? They started in November, 1824, and had lost £400 by the end of the year. In the following June they were £7,000 on the

wrong side. Disraeli, at twenty had begun that career of debt which he was to pursue through most of his life, even though later on Mary Anne, like Sarah in the case of grandfather Benjamin, would come to the rescue.

Still, he made some small profit out of finance because John Murray, the publisher, at whose house he had dined with his father, commissioned him to write a pamphlet on the subject of American mining companies. Shortly afterwards he wrote a second pamphlet on the same subject. This association with Murray gave Disraeli the opportunity to suggest the founding of a new daily paper, Conservative in politics, of an importance similar to that of *The Times*.

It is remarkable that even at this early age he should have displayed a capacity which was to serve him well throughout his life, that of being able to convince men much older or more influential than himself of the soundness of his ideas. No one would have expected a publisher of Murray's importance to entertain for a moment this vast scheme put forward by a young man whose sole litarary experience consisted in having written a couple of pamphlets. Strangely enough Murray did entertain it. Disraeli brought in a financier, and an agreement was signed that a morning paper should be published and managed by Murray, who was to have a half-share, the other half being split between the financier and Disraeli.

This all happened in 1825, brought about by the youthful Disraeli in his twenty-first year. They proposed to start the paper in the beginning of 1826, and as Murray wanted Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law, Lockhart, to undertake the editorship, he sent Disraeli to Scotland for the purpose of persuading Lockhart.

It developed into a very gallant enterprise. Disraeli as usual lived in superlatives. Edinburgh is the most beautiful city in the world, in spite of all he wrote to Sarah about Bruges and Brussels and Mainz and Darmstadt and Coblentz, and that all he has seen of the world is one corner of Europe. The four-in-hands of the Yorkshire squires could never be equalled outside Yorkshire. There is a characteristic touch about cold grouse and marmalade for breakfast.

Having seen Sir Walter and Lockhart he writes to Murray at great length on the strategy and tactics of persuading Lockhart that if he accepts their offer his will be a position of the greatest eminence and dignity. It seems strange at the present day that Lockhart apparently considered the editorship of a newspaper

ranking with *The Times* to be a comparatively base occupation not at all suited to his station. Still, Lockhart was persuaded, and Disraeli, back in London, immersed himself in the details of producing the paper. The usual office politics followed, and storms arose with Murray, but nothing could stop Disraeli, and he proceeded to christen the new paper *The Representative* with the unanimous approval of all concerned.

And there the story ends so far as he is concerned. Late in the year a financial crash occurred overwhelming him completely. Murray duly brought out the paper but it only lived for six months.

The strength of Disraeli's character lay in the fact that he invariably founded future successes on past failures. Having failed with a newspaper he proceeded to retrieve the situation with a novel. In the autumn of 1825 the Disraelis had taken a house near Amersham, and here in four months he wrote his first novel, *Vivian Grey*, finishing it before the end of his twenty-first year. It was of the high society type, imitated from a successful novel which had appeared in the preceding year. Austen, the solicitor, who let the Disraelis the house at Amersham, possessed a charming wife. After the *débâcle* of *The Representative* Disraeli had no hope of his novel's being accepted by Murray, and so he took the manuscript to Mrs. Austen, who knew a publisher named Colburn.

Her name was Sara, and she was very beautiful. Disraeli at twenty-one constituted the ideal protégé for a beautiful married woman. He had good looks, charm, gifts amounting to genius, and the further appeal from a woman's point of view that for the moment fate had crushed him. Besides, it was all so safe; she was a friend of his mother, and the last thing he desired would be a love affair with her. Nothing could result but that most delightful of relationships between an older, beautiful woman and a romantic young man who admired her discreetly and wished merely to sit at her feet and imbibe most sweetly-distilled wisdom. They met ostensibly on the plane of literature, and if occasionally she allowed her hand to linger for a little while in his, that too would form part of his education.

Sara Austen is the first of the women in Disraeli's life who devoted themselves unselfishly, or very nearly so, to the furthering of his interests. This was in the year 1826, when Lord William Crichton Stuart wanted to sit in Parliament for Cardiff once more, and Wyndham Lewis and Mary Anne were constrained to placate the electors of Aldeburgh, in Suffolk.

Sara wrote Disraeli a charming letter praising the novel, promising to use her influence with Colburn. He was not told the author's name, and Sara copied out the manuscript in order to preserve the secret. This alone demonstrates her profound interest in the young author, for copying a manuscript is tedious work, except as a labour of love. In any case anonymity was the mode of the moment. A publisher would produce a novel called So-and-So anonymously and follow it with another entitled Such-and-Such, by the author of So-and-So. Colburn, who understood publicity, led the world to suppose that the author's name had been suppressed because the portraits in the book were so true to life.

Consequently *Vivian Grey* became a success and the papers reviewed it at length. For the two volumes in which it first appeared Disraeli was paid £200. Unfortunately the secret of the author's name leaked out, whereupon a storm of ridicule burst upon his jet-black curls. Colburn had done his best to imply that the author of *Vivian Grey* was a man of fashion, and the critics turned on him. In spite of that the novel went into three editions.

Like many of Disraeli's novels it is largely autobiographical. Vivian Grey's father was a distinguished literary figure and Vivian is precocious and brilliant. This fits Isaac and Disraeli well enough. A Lord Beaconsfield figures in the book. Most critics agree that the hero of the first volume is Disraeli.

In June, 1826, after the excitement which attended the publication of *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli fell ill once more. Fortunately for him the Austens were about to start on a holiday in Switzerland and Italy and invited him to join them. One feels that the inspiration came from Sara, just as the inspiration came later to Wyndham Lewis from Mary Anne when Wyndham offered Disraeli a safe seat at Maidstone.

All the charming and devoted women who furthered his interests shared the prophetic inspiration that the gods loved him, that he had success written on his brow, and one day the gateway of fame would be open for him. The desire to be associated with success is common to most people, and women detect successful qualities in a man more quickly and accurately than others of his own sex. Thus Sara Austen reasoned no doubt that this precocious and handsome young man, with his amazing audacity tempered by a very real chivalry towards women, would one day pass out of her life in order to scale the heights for which he was destined, but at any rate for the moment he belonged to her.

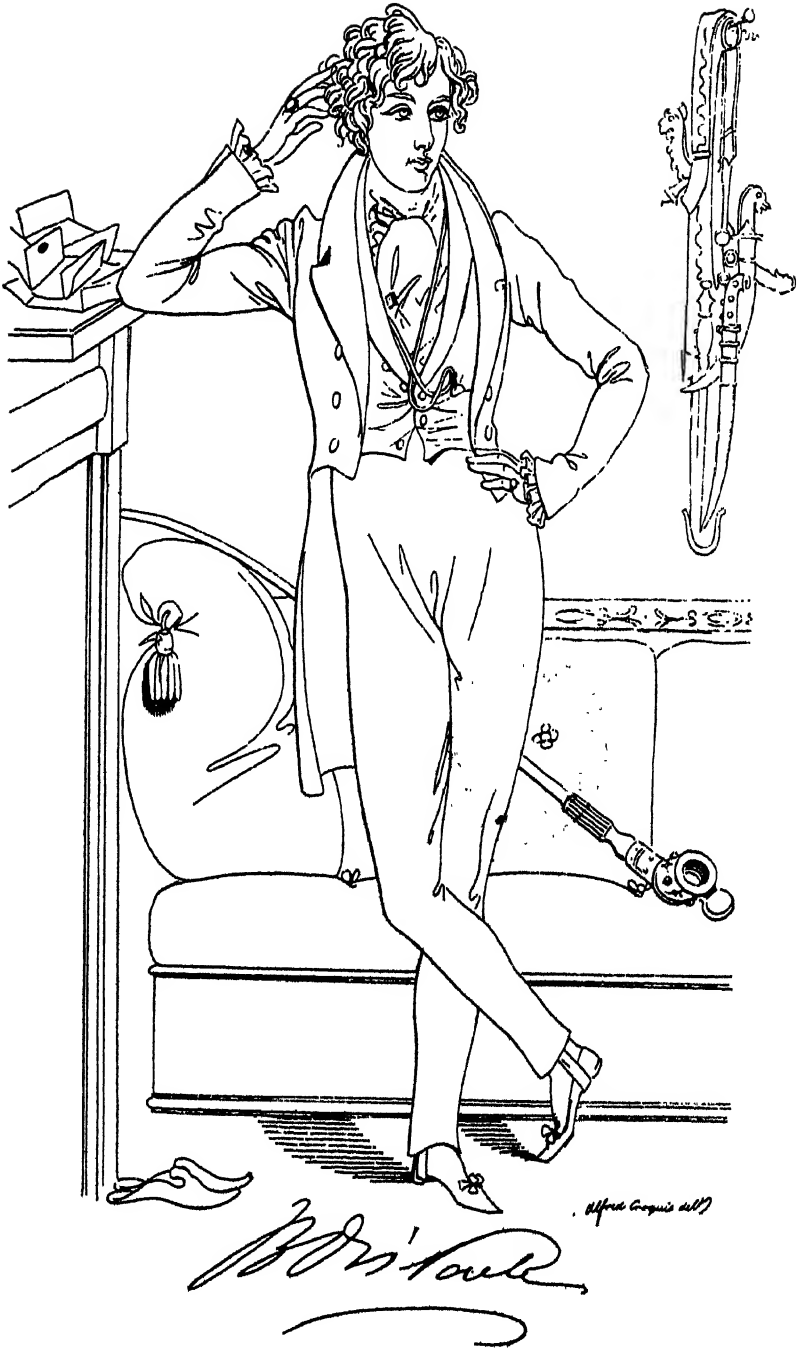
His political future she could not foretell, but her life had been spent in literary circles and she saw in him a writer of genius. Brooding over him she knew the pride of a trainer when, looking at a colt in a paddock, he feels convinced that he sees before him a future Derby winner.

Sara had engineered the handsome young man's first literary success and was entitled to some reward. Not only did she copy the manuscript but suggest certain alterations, and more important still it was she who sold it to Colburn. Thus no one could grudge her this delicately sentimental journey with her young lion through Switzerland and Italy, especially as her feelings toward him remained almost completely maternal. Besides, there was so much remaining for him to learn about women, and who could instil this necessary knowledge more subtly than she, against a background of Swiss mountains and Italian sunsets?

As for Disraeli, he had borne the strain of a failure and a success, collapsed under it, and seized with joy upon the opportunity to put London behind him and embark on weeks of pleasant wandering. London had seen his humiliation over Murray and *The Representative*, made amends by its attitude to *Vivian Grey*, and then, changing countenance once more, hurled bitter scorn at *Vivian Grey's* author once his name was known. London could go to hang; it had not given him much happiness so far; he would be quit of Scots reviewers who described *Vivian Grey* as a paltry catchpenny by an obscure person for whom nobody cares a straw.

Switzerland and Italy! Byron had known them both, that Byron of whom four years previously—how long ago it seemed and how much had happened since then—he heard intimate talk when dining, a mere shadow of his father, at Murray's table. Much water would flow under the bridges before he dined at Murray's table again. What had Tom Moore said of Byron? That he was getting fat and his hair was grey and his teeth were bad. Yet after all Byron had been the great literary figure of the age, who for all that admired Isaac, and had asked the publisher to send him anything new of Isaac's.

Byron knew Switzerland and Italy well. There were the days when he lived at Geneva, and moved in the same circle as the Shelleys and loved Mrs. Shelley's step-sister, Claire Clairmont, who became the mother of Allegra Byron. At Geneva he wrote the third canto of *Childe Harold* and began *Manfred*. Disraeli, too, meant to write in Switzerland, and in Italy. He would glide



DISRAELI AT THE PERIOD WHEN *VIVIAN GREY* WAS PUBLISHED

Note the rings, the ruffled shirt-sleeves, the pompoms on the shoes, the luxuriant curls, and the general atmosphere of the perfect dandy.

in gondolas along the canals of Venice, where Byron spent years in dissipation and wrote *Mazeppa* and the first two cantos of *Don Juan*, his masterpiece.

There the Countess Guiccioli rescued him and they lived together at Ravenna and Pisa and Genoa, cities with names like jewels. Into the young Disraeli's life also there might enter beautiful Contessas, mistresses of Italian palaces. After all, the star of his family had risen in Italy. Grandfather Benjamin, the English denizen of 1748, first saw the light there, and Italian influences remained with him to the end, since in the days of his prosperity he formed the Italian garden near Enfield, ate macaroni prepared by the Venetian consul, and sang canzonettas.

So Disraeli crossed over, from Dover to Boulogne, and all the trumpets of adventure sounded for him on the other side. The Austens and he set out for Paris, and it took them days, stopping at Montreuil and Grandvilliers on the way.

There begins once more the flood of enthusiastic correspondence typical of Disraeli on his travels, but this time he writes freely to Isaac as well as to Sarah. Paris, where he stayed in the rue de Rivoli, leaves him, as might be imagined, completely breathless, and he explores the city with the energy he brought to all his undertakings. Years later he was to return to Paris with Mary Anne and be received by the King, Mary Anne's presentation being impossible owing to some formality. Did he remember then the eager boy of twenty-one lost in wonder at the Cathedral of *Notre Dame*, and the *quais*, and the old city? He is so excited that he forgets to keep his diary, though Austen and Sara kept theirs faithfully. Sara, after all, could lend him hers to copy, re-living every incident, and chiding him gently for his lack of pains in not keeping his own.

They stayed in Paris a few days and continued to Geneva by the road which led through Dijon. How wonderfully one saw France from a travelling carriage drawn by post-horses, and how intimately one came to know one's companions. The isolation of the carriage resembled that of a ship at sea; he learned to recognise every light and shade of Sara's pretty face, the shadow of her eyelashes on her cheeks, Sara when happy and Sara when bored, the very play of her thoughts mirrored in those expressive eyes.

And yet, had he but known, mastery lay all the time with Sara, for all his precocity and the success of his first novel. She was happily married to Austen and had designed the pattern of her life, while that of his remained so far without design.

For her he represented the charm of a particularly appealing kitten or puppy, or of an exceptionally engaging child. As the journey proceeded the maternal side of her character became more and more in evidence. She wrote to Sarah, who in all this world was never, it seemed, to know the joys of continental vagabondage, noting the improvement in Disraeli's health with the most detached satisfaction. He was, after all, only a boy.

Geneva offered him the majesty of mountains and the blue waters of her lake as a spectacle, and conversations with a boatman who had waited upon Byron. The boatman gossipped, as boatmen will, of his one-time patron, and Disraeli recounts it all faithfully to Isaac. The food had left much to be desired between Paris and Geneva, but Geneva makes up for all shortcomings. Sara's French is even more rapid than her English.

Before he left Geneva he was able to witness a storm on the lake such as Byron had described in *Childe Harold*. He distinguishes it with the adjective sublime, which becomes gravely overworked in his descriptions of Alpine scenery. It must have seemed a great adventure to make the passage of the Simplon in a horse-drawn carriage, and inevitably the slowness of the procedure heightened the effect. The cold distressed the travellers—perhaps even Sara's delicious nose turned red or blue—and on the descent into Italy they welcomed the sun, and there were convents with cupolas and fig and acacia and almond trees. They saw the villa of the late queen, and the ornaments were so indelicate that it was painful to behold them in the presence of a lady. Evidently Sara had attained success in his sentimental education, and he remained full of a tender idealism that seems a thought wistful in these days when indelicacy has ceased to shock ladies, and even amuses them.

He dwells upon the kindness of the Austens and Austen's knowledge of the world in regard to postilions and strange coinages, and rejoices in the slowness of their journeying. Even at that period many travellers, according to Disraeli, had become slaves to the vice of speed.

There was never a more conscientious tourist than he, and he "did" Milan in detail under the guidance of an Italian doctor, to whom he had a letter of introduction, who lived in a palace and dined every day on beefsteak. Then, leaving Milan the party continued to Brescia and Verona.

Concerning Verona, Disraeli wrote Isaac a letter terribly reminiscent of a guide-book at its worst, but he rises to poetic heights on arriving at Venice.

There are the gliding gondolas, and St. Mark's, the Campanile, the Bridge of Sighs, the Palace of the Doges, and the prison. Nothing could have exceeded the magnificence of their lodgings. The Jew, with his black velvet cap, figured in the crowd. Music was never absent in Venice.

And then, of course, there were the palaces with names like Foscari, Grimani, and Barberigo. Disraeli could hardly fail to admire palaces, given the spaciousness of his ideas. Porphyry and agates and mosaics in gold, jasper, and lapis lazuli figure in the description. The cupolas are not only cupolas, but hooded cupolas. Literally Disraeli got drunk on Venice.

He continues to Florence and admits the existence of clever artists and sculptors in that city. Remember that these are all the quickly-conceived opinions of a boy of twenty-one, immature, impressionable, and uninstructed, who has just taken some of the chief sights of Europe at a gallop. He might have made more intelligent comments, but equally he might have made worse out of a surfeit of mental and spiritual indigestion. The marvel is that his opinions are as sound as they are. Leaving out the early nineteenth-century prancing of his letters, or, conversely, allowing for the colloquial balderdash of to-day, he makes a very creditable effect. It seems quaint in the light of the present that he employed a copyist to make a miniature of Charles the First by Vandyke for his father, when at this moment one can buy for a few pence reproductions of almost every notable picture on earth. The miniature failed to repeat the genius of the original, which suggests that a modern generation is insufficiently grateful to process engraving.

Florence, writes Disraeli, is cheap, for there luxuries are cheap. That of course is the criterion of cheapness, and England to-day is the dearest country in the world, because tobacco and wines and spirits are dear.

In all his descriptions of the marvels he saw the fact obtrudes itself that the marvels are not only marvellous in themselves, but because he saw them. In the language of the modern newspaper they are very carefully written up. It would not do for the palaces of the Foscari, Grimani and so on to disappoint. This is the young Disraeli's continental holiday, and he did not come out into the wilderness of Europe merely to see a reed shaken by the wind. Reading the account of his doings one feels inevitably that he has an eye on posterity. Even in his day the average son did not write such rotund, posed, and calculated letters to his father. Many of Disraeli's letters are

as intimate and personal as anyone's; those from Switzerland and Italy when he travelled in company with Sara and her husband are not among them. These are the careful effort of a rather self-conscious young man diligently sustaining the pose of an intelligent and instructed connoisseur. They form a very interesting comment on his state of mind at that period.

The travellers went on to Spezzia and Genoa and Turin. The Apennines draw from Disraeli lyrical passages reminiscent of the Song of Solomon. He cannot credit his geographical situation and demands passionately to site the Apennines in Asia under an Oriental sky, though the flora of the Apennines, which excites his wondering admiration, probably has little in common with that of Asia, be the sky of Asia never so Oriental.

It is all a part of his exotic nature. If Disraeli could return to earth at the age of twenty-one and travel in the tube from Piccadilly Circus to Edgware Road he would pour out lyrical ecstasies to Sarah or Isaac about the shining rails, the artistic treasure of the posters on the walls of the stations, the marvellous system of signalling which keeps one train from running into another, the ventilation, the convenience, the brilliant lighting ("Dizzy loves lights," Mary Anne once said), and all the rest of it. The fact is he could not see anything which interested him through the eyes of an ordinary person. It had to be enlarged, gilded, rhapsodised about till the commonplace became phenomenal, to assuage that appetite for the heroic which never left him.

And yet, at the end of these dithyrambs about the Apennines, and Venetian palaces, huge aloes, five capitals, and twelve great cities, there emerges the Disraeli who lived and still lives in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen. Dazzled by all that he has seen he declares solemnly that England with all her imperfections is worth the rest of the world put together. This may have been due to a sudden fit of home-sickness; more likely it signifies the mature Disraeli beginning to emerge from the moods, green-sickness and extravagances of youth.

He told his sister Sarah that he had not been idle, and this, as we shall see, was not an empty boast. In spite of his exuberance, affectations and general over-abundance, he won the approval of Sara Austen as a travelling companion. She wrote to Sarah that he is easily pleased, amusing, and actively kind.

They travelled by road more than two thousand miles, which sounds an incredible distance for horse transport, for even if

they averaged ten miles an hour, an impossible feat, it would mean two hundred driving hours.

The not being idle of which Disraeli acquainted Sarah produced a sequel to *Vivian Grey*, which he completed during his wanderings with Sara Austen and her husband. It was definitely inferior to the original two volumes, and the scene is that of the German tour which Disraeli undertook with Isaac and Meredith two years previously. A Byronic melancholy distinguishes the Vivian Grey of the sequel, probably due to the author's unhappy experiences with Murray and *The Representative*, his debts, his illness, the brutality of certain critics in connection with the original two volumes of *Vivian Grey*, and above all to Disraeli's continued lack of direction.

It is not hard to understand his desolation at this stage of his career when he is not rhapsodising about mountains, lakes, pictures, and palaces in letters written home with one eye on posterity. He was twenty-one, and so far without the slightest pretensions to a career, and he owed a great deal of money. Murray disliked him and the critics were against him owing to Colburn's misguided publicity in connection with the original two volumes of *Vivian Grey*. He was obsessed by an overweening ambition which found no outlet, he could not bear to be ignored, he must excel or perish, and yet there seemed no direction in which he was likely to excel.

Doctors tell us that it is impossible to bully Nature, that Nature always strikes an average, that stages of unusual activity are followed by stages of recuperation during which nothing of any account is produced. Disraeli cetainly justified this theory after the appearance of the sequel to *Vivian Grey*.

The next three years were almost completely fruitless. The precocious youth who set Murray by the ears, made his flying visit to Scotland and electrified Sir Walter Scott and Lockhart, paid for his precociousness by a long period when he lay fallow. There was some talk of the Bar in 1827, but except for keeping his terms and eating his dinners at Lincoln's Inn for two years nothing came of it. Apart from this the two years show hardly anything accomplished.

The explanation is simple. During those two years Disraeli suffered from one of the strange and obscure states of depression to which people who have over-taxed their physical and nervous strength fall victims. If we look back on his early career there is no reason for surprise. When he was twelve has grandfather Benjamin wrote anxiously about "poor little Ben," who had been

very ill. At sixteen he left school and read voraciously at home for a year. Then came the apprenticeship to Messrs. Swain, Stevens, Maples, Pearse & Hunt in Frederick's Place, and the unfortunate speculation in company with Evans which laid upon him the burden of debt, to be followed by the feverish planning which preceded the founding of *The Representative*.

In all these years his only weeks of complete relaxation occurred during the tour of Belgium and Germany with Isaac after a second illness. On his travels in Switzerland and Italy with Sara and Austen, after a third, he wrote the sequel to *Vivian Grey*, so that they formed only a partial holiday.

Consequently this queer, paradoxical young man, who admired his industrious recluse of a father, more or less ignored his mother, because Maria found herself incapable of entering into her son's intellectual life, and depended almost pathetically on the sympathy and my-brother-right-or-wrong (but never wrong) attitude of his sister Sarah, found himself in a strange mental state, quite unable to set about the business of a career. He suffered from blinding headaches and could not concentrate for long on work of any kind. He was ill in the summer of 1827 and in the summer of 1828; fortunately there were always Isaac and the family home to fall back on in these distressing conditions. With them he shared country holidays in Oxfordshire, where the Austens joined them, and at Lyme Regis. Still, he managed somehow in the intervals of being ill to write a satirical work entitled *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla*, which the faithful Colburn published in 1828.

Disraeli dedicated *Captain Popanilla* to a certain Plumer Ward, whose house at Amersham the Disraelis once rented, thus leading to Disraeli's acquaintanceship with the delightful Sara Austen, since Austen acted for Ward in the matter. This dedication may have been intended to make some slight return to Ward for the fact that his novel *Tremaine* had served as a model for *Vivian Grey*. Ward behaved as all people to whom books are dedicated should behave, and praised *Captain Popanilla* to the skies, hailing Disraeli as a second Swift. He was alone in his opinion, though that scarcely detracts from the compliment.

This was all Disraeli had to show for the years 1827 and 1828. He continued, according to his own statement, as ill as ever. Years afterwards his doctor described the complaint as chronic inflammation of the membranes of the brain. It sounds more like severe neurasthenia brought on by over-work and an over-excitable nature. Throughout his life he alternated between

periods of severe stress and subsequent periods of semi-collapse, and in later years he was accustomed to recuperate periodically at Hughenden, his Buckinghamshire estate, under the care of Mary Anne, from the exhaustion of parliamentary sessions.

In the summer of 1829 Isaac took a step which contributed very materially to his son's recovery by moving from London to Bradenham, an old manor house hear High Wycombe. This manorial splendour alone acted like a tonic on Disraeli, who always loved splendour for splendour's sake. Beyond that he was fascinated by the park of Bradenham with its grass-land and beech woods. Walking there, alone or with Sarah, he set himself to analyse his failures of the past and plan the triumphs of the future. Bradenham did him more good than all the doctors; regularly it was to be the starting-point of his enterprises and a retreat from his failures, a refuge alike from duns, and the exacting social life of London. Here his family were first to meet Mary Anne, and after their marriage for years it provided them with a country home, since all the Disraelis adored her.

At Bradenham he remained for nearly a year while the clean, reviving air of Buckinghamshire healed him mentally and physically. After a long lapse of time he could still describe the house affectionately in his novel *Endymion* as :

> ". . . an old hall with gable ends and lattice windows standing in grounds which once were stately, and where there are yet glade-like terraces of yew-trees, which give an air of dignity to a neglected scene. In front of the hall huge gates of iron, highly wrought, and bearing an ancient date as well as the shield of a noble house, opened on a village green, round which were clustered the cottages of the parish with only one exception, and that was the vicarage house, a modern building, not without taste, surrounded by a small yet brilliant garden."

How the ancient date and the arms of the noble house must have comforted him!

Here then Disraeli lingered. He wanted his father to buy him a country estate where he could settle down, but Isaac rebelled. The Austens invited him to London, but he remained at Bradenham, partly on account of his health, partly because appearance in London meant pursuit by his creditors, of whom the innocent Isaac knew nothing. He planned a journey to the East which Isaac forbade for the moment. Disraeli therefore

settled down to write a book in order to make money for the Eastern journey.

It is one of the features of his career that periodically, whatever else may be occupying him at the time, he is obliged to sit down and write a novel in order to make money. Consequently, with the call of the East becoming more and more insistent, he sat down to write *The Young Duke*.

He began it towards the end of 1829 and finished it in the spring of 1830. Evidently, judging from the reception given to *Captain Popanilla* there was no money in satire, at any rate for the moment, so he returned to the vein of *Vivian Grey* and produced another novel of high society, society so high in fact that Isaac is said to have exclaimed with the depressing candour always shown by relations to budding geniuses: "What does Ben know of dukes?" Actually Ben knew extremely little about dukes at this stage, but the time would come when he was to meet them on terms of equality.

His hero, the Duke of St. James is, as usual, a Disraelish creature, influenced by a lady called May Dacre, a distinctly attractive heroine whom, seeing she belongs to the Roman Catholic faith, the Young Duke fascinates by a speech in support of Catholic Emancipation, a remarkable means of winning a lady's affections, but effective in his instance. (The Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in 1829, when the Duke of Wellington introduced a bill throwing open the Houses of Parliament and most public offices to Roman Catholics. The Young Duke's method of appealing to his beloved represented, therefore, a topical touch.)

The novel has serious political leanings and includes parliamentary sketches which give thumbnail portraits of the debaters of those days and indicate that Disraeli's passion for politics remained as intense as ever. Canning, Sir Francis Burdett, Brougham, Macaulay, Peel, and even the Duke of Wellington are included in the gallery.

The autobiographical interest predominates for all that. Disraeli never seems to tire of turning his characters into mouthpieces for his opinions, philosophy, ambitions, and views on everything under the sun relevant or irrelevant. The writer of to-day can do no more then envy the latitude allowed by publishers to authors in the early nineteenth century; few modern authors could claim the indulgence of their publisher or even their public while they digressed from the main theme of a novel in order to discuss the oratory of, let us say, Mr. Ramsay

Macdonald, Mr. Baldwin, Sir Herbert Samuel, Mr. George Lansbury, and Lord Hailsham. In Disraeli's time the action of a novel proceeded at the speed of the post-horse and the sailing-ship. Nowadays it has to synchronise with that of the sports car and the aeroplane. Also the modern writer would never be allowed to pad as Disraeli padded in such passages as:

> "Oh, my soul, must we then part? (The character refers to his own soul and is not addressing a lady.) Is this the end of all our conceptions, all our musings, our panting thoughts (can thoughts pant?), our gay fancies, our bright imaginings, our delicious reveries, and exquisite communing? Is this the end, the great and full result, of all our sweet society?"

What the character really means by all this is: "Am I going to die?"

There is also a piece about his father, foreshadowing their parting when, thanks to money earned by writing *The Young Duke*, Disraeli would really and truly set out for the East:

> "Oh, my father! . . . Peace brood o'er thy lettered bowers and Love smile in the cheerful hall (this means Bradenham) that I shall not forget upon the swift Symplegades, or where warm Syria, with its palmy shore, recalls our holy ancestry!"

The Symplegades have always exercised a fatal attraction for writers apt to be seduced by fine words. Swinburne also fell:

> "Who shall seek thee and bring
> And restore thee thy day,
> When the dove dipt her wing
> And the oars won their way
> Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of
> Propontis with spray?"

But then Swinburne also was a precocious young man, and had red hair into the bargain.

The Young Duke includes also a particularly juicy passage about England, thus:

> "Oh England! Oh my country—although full many an Eastern clime and Southern race have given me something of their burning blood it flows for thee! I rejoice that my flying fathers threw their ancient seed on the stern shores which they have not dishonoured: I am proud to be thy child."

It is a far cry from this sort of thing to the joyful metaphor in a speech against Peel: "The right hon. gentleman caught the

Whigs bathing and walked away with their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position and he is himself a strict conservative of their garments."

If Disraeli was ever to reach the Eastern climes and Southern races whence his flying fathers arrived to throw their ancient seed on the stern shores of England it became necessary, having written *The Young Duke*, to find a publisher. He asked to see Murray with a view to placing it with him, but Murray was not at home. The affair of *The Representative* still rankled in his memory. Disraeli betook himself to the excellent Colburn, but Colburn's reader was critical rather than enthusiastic. Disraeli therefore turned to Lytton Bulwer for comfort.

This remarkable young man had made a success with a novel called *Pelham*, whereupon Disraeli exchanged books with him and they corresponded until a meeting took place.

Bulwer was married, and thus, when Mary Anne, her friend, wished Disraeli to be introduced to her at Rosina Bulwer's house it was a simple matter for his beautiful wife Rosina to comply with the request. The two young dandies, Bulwer and Disraeli, solemnly discussing Disraeli's latest masterpiece must have made an affecting picture, both admirably earnest and intense. Bulwer praised *The Young Duke* and then suggested that the use of a blue pencil might not do it any harm. Disraeli writhed, but he had heard the East a-calling and heeded naught else. Colburn must be persuaded, and persuaded he was at last to pay five hundred pounds for *The Young Duke*.

The author's clothes may have had something to do with the deal, for a friend records at this time that Disraeli was wearing a blue surtout, military light blue trousers, black stockings with red stripes, and shoes. Another eye-witness speaks of him in green velvet trousers, a canary-coloured waistcoat, low shoes, silver buckles, lace at his wrists, and hair in ringlets.

A contemporary portrait supports these descriptions. It shows him standing before a mantelpiece with one knee crossed over the other, the right elbow leaning on the mantelpiece, and the right hand toying with the jet-black ringlets. He wears a tail coat, and truly there is lace at his wrists. His trousers are strapped beneath slippers adorned with pompoms at the instep. His waistcoat and stock are incredibly magnificent and rings adorn the fingers of both hands. The face is exceptionally good-looking, with a sensitive mouth and large, expressive eyes; the hair rivals in length that of an eminent professional pianist.

The clothes worn by gentlemen of the period, as exhibited in

that fountain of all wisdom, the Victoria and Albert Museum, show us none of this gaiety. Excepting an occasional pair of white Nankeen trousers, they are dignified to the point of sombreness. We have also the example of Wyndham Lewis, whose apparel featured a quiet richness and superlative cut, who would have died rather than wear red-striped stockings, or a canary waistcoat except in the hunting-field. But then it must never be forgotten that Wyndham Lewis had the coal-fields of Glamorganshire behind him, a castle in Wales, and a London house, while Disraeli had nothing except bed and board at Bradenham, an occasional few hundreds from a novel, and crushing debts.

It was impossible to overlook Wyndham Lewis, a landed gentleman of Wales, a Deputy-Lieutenant, M.P. for Aldeburgh, a rich man. Disraeli, a Jew, with no resources and no prospects except such as he might attain by the exercise of his restless genius spurred on by ambition, might quite well be overlooked for the rest of his life. Therefore he took pains to make himself conspicuous.

The determination to cut a figure in the world was at the root of all his arrogance, affectation, and eccentricity of costume. People might detest him, but at least they should not ignore him. The couplet:

> "*Cet animal est très méchant :*
> *Quand on l'attaque, il se défend.*"

might have been written especially for him.

In the new year of 1830 he was in the grip of an inspiration to visit the East, and nothing should stop him, neither debts, nor lack of money, nor the objections which at first his father raised. There is no doubt that the resulting journey exerted a remarkable influence on his career. The late Lord Curzon provides a modern instance of a statesman who, as a young man, learned the East at first hand in preparation for his future destiny. To Disraeli's expedition we can trace the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, and to Curzon's the Vice-Royalty of India. Moreover, Disraeli's travels in the East saw the beginning of that Imperial outlook which influenced his policy when he became Prime Minister.

At the time when the plan first came into his mind the lure of the East arose mainly from its alleged grandeur, and the fact that in the East his race was cradled. Beyond that its sun and colour, its beauty and barbarism, its intrigue and cruelty were such as to appeal to his nature. Solomon brought gold and ivory

and apes and peacocks in ships of Tarshish, and silver was nothing accounted in his day; such an atmosphere could not fail to attract a debt-encumbered young man of ambition who once remarked that moderate reputation could give him no pleasure.

Like all really great men he kicked down light-heartedly any ladder by which he had reached a desired position. Once *The Young Duke* had provided the necessary five hundred pounds the book ceased to interest him, and remained for the rest of his life the Cinderella among his novels. It appeared long after he left England and he announced to Sarah that it could take its chance. Sarah, as might have been expected, went into ecstasies over it when it was published and wrote to him with her pen dipped in her heart's blood. *The Young Duke* pleased the public both in England and in the United States.

It was arranged that Meredith, the companion of Isaac's and Disraeli's holiday in Belgium and Germany some years before, should accompany him on this more majestic promenade to the East. Meredith was now engaged to Sarah, but he longed, as well he might, for one last bachelor expedition before settling down. The faithful Sarah raised no objection, for she was not one to make objections. The only sister among three brothers, the dutiful daughter of a remote and distinguished father, she recognised very well her place in the scheme of things where men were concerned; a minor place whence one gave continually and received little or nothing beyond a kindly tolerance and the opportunity to sympathise or admire as occasion offered.

It seems appropriate here to describe the faithful Sarah. According to her portrait she was by no means a beauty, but she has a strong, intelligent face which suggests that she would stick to anyone she loved through thick and thin. She wears a singularly ugly dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves, and her high-piled hairdressing is so distasteful to modern eyes that the portrait probably fails to do her justice.

Before leaving England Disraeli wrote two fairly important letters. One was to Evans with whom he had indulged in rash speculation during the days when they both worked in the office of Messrs. Swain, Stevens, Maples, Pearse, & Hunt at Frederick's Place.

The best of us becomes vaguely sentimental when on the point of leaving his native land for a long period, when the thought occurs inevitably that with bad luck he may never see it again, and in this conventionally sentimental state Disraeli recalled old friends, old faces and old debts. He told Evans that

to depart without settling his accounts cut him to the heart, expressed the hope that Evans was doing well in the world, and that he would see him at Bradenham some day.

There is no record that this letter produced any result, but the second, to Murray, hoping to submit a manuscript on the writer's return from the East, led to a renewal of business associations in the future.

Having made his peace all round so far as circumstances permitted Disraeli sailed from London with Meredith for Gibraltar. Once again begins the stream of letters to Isaac at Bradenham, still written from all appearances with one eye on posterity.

At Gibraltar the Garrison Library has the good taste to include all Isaac's works. The Governor, a very fine old gentleman of the Windsor Terrace school, asked the travellers to dinner. Evidently in those days the lot of governors and other officials in outposts of the Empire was much the same as it is to-day, namely, to dispense official hospitality at the official residence to passing strangers, using a nice discretion, aided by the tact of A.D.C.'s, as to who came within the social pale and who remained outside it.

Disraeli complains about his health, but spends eight hours a day on horseback. Momentous news is that the officers wear no waistcoats in the morning. Since notoriety must be gained somehow he attains it by carrying two different canes, one for the morning and one for the evening. He changes them at gun-fire, to the astonishment of the garrison.

At this date Mary Anne was still ignorant of his existence, except that she may have read *Vivian Grey*, though it might not have appealed to her sophisticated taste because Mary Anne at the time knew high life from the inside and had no need to read about it described from the outside in a high-life novel by young Mr. Disraeli who, as his father remarked, knew nothing of dukes. Wyndham Lewis still sat for Aldeburgh, so soon—for it was now the year 1830—to be extinguished both geographically and legislatively, and Mary Anne displayed her charm, her tact and her beauty at parties she gave at his house in Grosvenor Place. She was now thirty-eight, Wyndham Lewis was fifty, and Disraeli twenty-six.

Directly he began his travels the word sublime cropped up again in his correspondence, applied this time to the Straits of Gibraltar. The Governor's wife, though very old, is very agreeable. Probably she never saw anything quite so amusing

in her life as this spectacular guest, a whole cabaret show in himself as it were. He complains that his hair is coming off, just when it was so luxuriant that ladies mistook it for a wig and had to be allowed to pull it to convince them that it was real.

Meredith and he remained for two months in Spain. Life in Spain comprises one long rhapsody made up of ten hours in the twenty-four on horseback, sailing on the Quadalquivir, bull-fights and brigands. Ladies on balconies ravished the senses. Byron also had noticed this, for did he not write, in *Beppo*:

> "I said that like a picture by Giorgione
> Venetian women were, and so they *are*,
> Particularly seen from a balcony
> (For beauty's sometimes best set off afar)
> And there, just like a heroine of Goldoni,
> They peep from out the blind or o'er the bar;
> And, truth to say, they're mostly very pretty,
> And rather like to show it, more's the pity!"

True, Byron's balconies were in Venice and Disraeli's in Cadiz and Seville, but a balcony is a balcony all the world over, though in the days of Byron and Disraeli it was pronounced "balcóny."

In spite of his health, food comes in, as usual, for a good deal of favourable notice. Mary Anne was to realise later on his partiality for good things, hence that historic pie from Fortnum and Mason which yet loomed in the future, its very meat not yet bred, the grain for its flour as yet unsown. There were the inevitable *olla podrida*, good soups, and an *olio*. To make an *olio*, take boiled beef, boiled pork sausage, and black pudding. Serve a portion of each, and add French beans, slices of melons, and whole pears. Mix them on the plate and pour over them quantities of tomato sauce.

He is enraptured and overwhelmed at the language of the fan as manipulated by the young ladies of Spain. A yeoman of signals R.N. with two signalling flags could hardly say more, and would certainly say it less appealingly, than Lola or Carmencita with a fan. In spite of all, he begs Sarah to tell him about Bradenham and the dogs and the horses.

At Malta he really behaved very badly, so that according to a friend named Clay the Mess refused to tolerate "that damned bumptious Jew boy" any more, in spite of Disraeli's remark that "affection tells here better than wit." But then if one will dine at the Mess in Andalusian dress what can one expect? A Mess is a conservative institution, even to this day. Moreover,

he went visiting in a sash all the colours of the rainbow, and white trousers. Last but not least, he learned to smoke—of course he is the greatest smoker in Malta—and finds it relieves his head. There is also his costume of a Greek pirate—a red shirt with silver studs, a red scarf round the waist full of pistols and daggers, red cap, red slippers, broad blue striped jacket and trousers.

Disraeli, on the other hand, considered himself a great social success, and that "Ponsonby, the Governor" was very friendly. Ponsonby, reputed extremely exclusive, could never have seen that rainbow sash. Finally, Disraeli and Meredith left Malta in a yacht hired by Clay. Clay's valet was called Giovanni, *alias* Tita, and Byron had died in his arms. The yacht, named *Susan*, of fifty-five tons, carried a crew of seven. The name struck the travellers as unromantic and so they painted it out.

After touching at Corfu, Disraeli, Meredith, and Clay, with a guard of Albanians, arrived at Yanina. Disraeli was presented to the Grand Vizier, and as he found the local costumes rich and various decided to dress for the occasion. He wore, according to Meredith, a red shirt, green pantaloons with a velvet stripe, a silk shawl round his waist, red slippers and a Spanish jacket.

All these extravagances are merely so much evidence of the fact that he had found his spiritual home in the East. Its garishness, for the East is above all garish, appealed to the exotic streak in him. He loved gorgeous colours, large mountains, strong sunlight, pleasant fruits and what he was pleased to call the sublime. Moreover, he longed to become a personage, and almost any Englishman was, and still is, a personage in the East, whose inhabitants will always produce for an Englishman a string of honorifics and a servile manner in exchange for a moderate tip.

Besides that, the English whom he met in Malta and Gibraltar were likely to treat him with more consideration than if they had met him at home. In a station overseas where everyone knows everyone else to the point of boredom a strange face provides a much-needed touch of novelty even if its owner proves something of a mountebank. Thus Ponsonby, the Governor, could afford a greater measure of friendliness in Malta than in the Parish of St. James's. Disraeli in Malta was a bird of passage, there one day and gone the next. Friendliness in this instance committed Ponsonby to nothing more than temporary hospitality to the son of a distinguished man of letters, and if the son

showed a lamentable taste in dress from Ponsonby's point of view, he would not remain at Malta to offend the eye very long.

As for the Grand Vizier, an official quite unaccustomed to English visitors, the more bizarre the visitor's costume the greater impression he would make.

These facts Disraeli seems not to have realised, or to have ignored. All that concerned him was that he should cut a figure and make himself the talk of the station. So far he had never been able to make himself the talk of London, try as he might. Remote from creditors and critics he secured with no great expenditure of money or effort the notoriety for which he longed. Better even that young officers should refer to him as "that damned bumptious Jew boy" than leave him unnoticed.

Thus Gibraltar and Malta with their governors and garrisons became mere practice grounds for the conquest of London which he meant to achieve later. He would try on them the effect of his methods, and see whether the methods succeeded or failed, just as to-day a theatrical manager produces a piece first in the provinces because a provincial failure costs less than a London failure and the lessons learned in the provinces may lead to a London success.

Could he force himself on the society of Gibraltar and Malta so that it dared not ignore him? If so, the same tactics must bring the same success in London. As for the arrogance, the showmanship, what the young officers called damned bumptiousness, who cared? They were only a means to an end. Disraeli had a theory that every man has a right to be conceited until he is successful. After that there would be no further need for conceit. Thus far success eluded him, and so, according to his theory, he still had a right to conceit.

For all the contempt of the young officers the spectacle of this calculated clowning on Disraeli's part has something splendid about it. No one realised better than he that he behaved like a clown, but no one else knew why. It takes a certain amount of spirit to play the clown, a lack of self-consciousness, and a sense of humour. Deep within himself he knew that he possessed genius which one day would allow him to outshine even the G.O.C. at Gibraltar, who never appeared in public except in full uniform, and the opinion of subalterns and even governors meant nothing to him. He merely wished to dominate them, and did by the method of studied eccentricity.

To govern men, he said, you must either excel them at their accomplishments or despise them. He despised the military

THE AUTHOR OF "THE CHILD'S GIFT"

THE THREE BEAUTIFUL SHERIDANS

They were the daughters of Tom Sheridan (son of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist) and his wife Caroline Henrietta, one of the beauties of her day. Tom Sheridan's mother was also one of the beauties of her day. (*Left*) Jane Georgiana, Duchess of Somerset, in the costume she wore as Queen of Beauty at the Eglinton Tournament. (*Centre*) The Hon. Caroline Norton. (*Right*) Helena Selina, Lady Dufferin.

cliques of Gibraltar and Malta, and showed it by dining with them in what amounted to fancy dress. In consequence he became their one topic of conversation.

Disraeli had a very exact appreciation of a man who could play the clown without losing dignity, as witness his first meeting with Montagu Corry, who afterwards became his faithful private secretary. Mr. Buckle records that one wet afternoon at a house-party the girls insisted that a very quiet young man should dance and sing a comic song at the same time. This young man was Montagu Corry.

Disraeli appeared during the performance and looked on. Corry felt singularly foolish, because he wished to make a good impression on Disraeli. The great man, for this occurred in the days of his greatness, remained impassive, but the whole-hearted manner in which Corry had made himself ridiculous in order to amuse the girls appealed to him.

Corry became his secretary, and on Lord Beaconsfield's final defeat by Gladstone all he asked of Queen Victoria was a peerage for Corry, who took the title of Lord Rowton. This reward for a private secretary created ill-feeling, and some people said unkind things in consequence.

Disraeli continued his wanderings and his enthusiasms. Having raved about Asia, he cast that continent to the winds on discovering Greece, and apologised to Isaac for his Asiatic rhapsodies. They reached Athens, and like every great sight beheld for the first time, Athens eclipses everything he has ever seen before, but the hardships of travel in Greece distress him so that he is glad to reach Constantinople. The *Susan* sailed proudly up the Dardanelles, which he considered is not so "sublime" as the Straits of Gibraltar. He compared the bazaar at Constantinople to a square mile of Burlington Arcades, which seems to anyone who has ever seen an eastern bazaar an unfortunate simile.

At Constantinople a strange indolence overcame him. Ambition departed and he no longer wished to achieve anything. He felt content with the life of a complete idler, so long as the idling could take place in Turkey where the sun shone and the tobacco was good, and no vulgar English politics intruded. Finally, he and Clay weighed anchor and set sail for Smyrna, where Meredith had preceded them overland. From Smyrna the *Susan* continued to Jaffa.

There they landed, and left on horseback for Jerusalem, which it was Disraeli's great desire to visit. For a wonder

Jerusalem is not more remarkable than Athens, and he brackets the two cities equal in impressiveness. The party went on to Egypt and remained there four months.

He must be considered a hardy traveller, for he rode across the desert from Alexandria to Rosetta, a journey of twelve hours; after that five days' journey up the Nile brought him to Cairo.

On the voyage to Thebes they encountered a sand-storm which tore the sails to pieces and terrified him. Thebes, once seen, completely eclipsed Athens, though there is no mention of Jerusalem. In all they travelled seven hundred miles up the Nile and then returned to Cairo.

Here he lingered with Clay, who became ill. Meredith, it seems, remained in upper Egypt. Giovanni, or Tita, was ill also, and of the Cairo contingent only Disraeli continued in good health. Perfectly happy he revelled in Oriental life, extolled the fruits of Egypt and Syria, and made the strange statement that the most delicious thing in the world is a banana.

He was now twenty-seven, still without the semblance of a career, his achievements in the past confined to a few novels, the only clue to his future a passion for politics. On the face of it he could look back on a good many years which the locust had eaten, for in a period when politicians were not compelled to serve the Party for decades in order to become candidates for office during their middle age, as now, he would enter late into the political field, supposing he entered it at all. Fox had been a Member of Parliament at the age of nineteen and a junior Lord of the Admiralty at twenty-one; in May of this very year, while Disraeli lingered in the East, Gladstone, aged twenty-two, had been elected M.P. for the borough of Newark at the invitation of the Duke of Newcastle, on the strength of a speech lasting for three-quarters of an hour at the Oxford Union in support of a motion condemning the Reform Bill. This Bill, said young Mr. Gladstone, was calculated to break up the whole frame of society.

Thus Gladstone knew where he stood, politically speaking, or thought he did, for in the light of history it seems peculiar to see him a candidate for Newark at the invitation of a High Tory duke, whereas Disraeli had not even made up his mind on which side of the political fence to come down. In *The Young Duke*, finished immediately before leaving England, he had written, autobiographically as usual:

"Am I a Whig or a Tory? I forget. As for the Tories, I admire antiquity, particularly a ruin; even the relics of the Temple of Intolerance have a charm. I think I am a Tory. But then the Whigs give such good dinners, and are the most amusing. I think I am a Whig; but then the Tories are so moral, and morality is my forte; I must be a Tory. But the Whigs dress so much better; and an ill-dressed party, like an ill-dressed man, must be wrong. Yes, I am a decided Whig! And yet—I feel like Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy."

How this frivolity must have shocked Gladstone, who never had any doubts about anything, supposing he ever read *The Young Duke*.

For the rest, in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard those who began work late received a penny, exactly the same as those who began early. Supposing he ever reached his goal and found himself returned to Westminster, what a marvellous preparation Disraeli had made for the responsibilities of statesmanship. At the age of twenty-seven he knew intimately almost every country in Europe, as well as Egypt and Palestine. With Isaac he had toured Belgium and Germany; with Austen and Sara Austen he had posted two thousand miles from Paris through France, Switzerland and Italy. With Meredith and Clay he had coasted along the Mediterranean from Malta to Constantinople in the fifty-five-ton *Susan* because, as he said, that was the only way to explore the Mediterranean where every bay and headland held an interest of its own.

From Constantinople the *Susan* had sailed to Jaffa and Alexandria; and then followed the seven hundred mile trip up the Nile and back.

All this comprised no mere peaceful globe-trotting. In the Mediterranean they exercised the crew in musketry on account of pirates; in Greece and Spain they rode armed, on account of bandits. They rode in an armed party from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and travelled with an Albanian guard to Yanina. On the way up to Yanina Disraeli got very drunk with a young Bey; at Yanina he had audience of the Grand Vizier; in Greece he considered himself lucky, when moving about the country, if he could find shelter for the night in a vermin-infested shed; in Cairo he met Mehemet Ali; he rode through the whole of Andalusia on horseback; and there were, of course, the G.O.C. at Gibraltar and Ponsonby, the Governor at Malta.

After these journeyings and experiences it would seem remarkable if any European crisis could occur anywhere without his having first-hand knowledge of the people and the locality. Moreover, in a year of such travel his acquaintance with human nature must have become extensive and peculiar; he would say and do the right things whether Ponsonby the Governor, a Greek bandit, a Spanish grandee or a Turkish Bey engaged in "pacifying" Albania was in question.

One would hesitate to claim as much on behalf of Gladstone for all his juvenile entry into Parliament. True he travelled, in Italy, and proposed to his wife by moonlight in the Coliseum. He returned to Italy later in life and rode on a singularly ungenerous mule which he was compelled to beat continually. This induced the reflection that just as he felt towards the mule so Queen Victoria had always felt towards him, and he realised in a flash what she must have suffered whenever he held the office of Prime Minister. Faced by a Greek bandit Gladstone would probably have delivered a speech on the right of an English (or Scottish) gentleman to go unmolested, and been shot for his pains.

So, by the time Disraeli found himself lingering in Cairo waiting for Meredith to arrive, and for the recovery of Clay, longing for England and Bradenham and yet fascinated by the strange, indolent life of the East, the soil was prepared for the sowing. He halted without being aware of the fact in a kind of no-man's-land between two worlds, that of the past wherein he had lacked direction and that of the future when he was to know with almost furious conviction what he meant to do if only he could overcome the initial barrier to his ambitions and attain what he coveted more than anything else; a seat in Parliament.

The dreamy days in Cairo came suddenly to an end. Meredith returned there at the end of June. He and Disraeli had intended to return to England by way of Italy in order to see Naples and Rome, but sudden tragedy overwhelmed them. Meredith went down with smallpox and died of it towards the end of July.

His death brought about one of the crises of Disraeli's life because Meredith was engaged to Sarah, and Disraeli loved Sarah better than anyone in the world. He could not escape the reflection that but for this tour of the East which he had projected Meredith would never have travelled to Cairo and never died there of smallpox. In the acuteness of his grief he wrote heart-broken letters home. He tells Isaac he would willingly have given his life for Meredith's and that he will

come home directly, imploring Isaac at the same time to comfort Sarah.

This letter and the one to Sarah show none of the usual Disraelian excessiveness of expression. He tells Sarah his thoughts are only for her, and begs her to live for him in future. "I have no wife, I have no betrothed; nor since I have been better acquainted with my own mind and temper have I sought them." He swears they shall never part, but share "the perfect love of a brother and sister."

On reaching England he found a sorrowful household. Bradenham was still Bradenham with its beech-woods and glades, the horses and dogs of which he had begged Sarah to send him news in her letters—not politics, but home news, was what he wanted from her—gave him an affectionate welcome, but Sarah had almost collapsed under the blow of Meredith's death. She was a simple soul emotionally, completely absorbed in the two men she loved, Meredith and her eldest brother. For her there could be no second blooming in the emotional sense. Meredith was her first and last lover. She was too intelligent to make herself ill with grief, and she transferred her love for Meredith to Disraeli, adding it to her already deep affection for him. No one, not even Mary Anne, ever had more unshakable faith in him, and his career became henceforward her main interest in life. Unlike Mary Anne she did not live to see him Prime Minister.

He repaid this devotion on Sarah's part by making her his lifelong confidante and writing her a long series of affectionate letters giving her the earliest possible news of all that was happening to him. After his marriage Mary Anne became her great friend; the two women found themselves linked very closely by their common interest in their husband and brother. Mary Anne recognised the inhabitants of Bradenham for the charming family they were: the gentle, dreamy old father, suffering patiently the affliction of failing eyesight, the affectionate wife and mother completely absorbed in husband and children, the sincere, loyal Sarah, and the two younger brothers who looked up to Disraeli with admiration and awe. She was never jealous of Sarah, and Sarah was never jealous of her. Each seemed to understand that her own part in Disraeli's life remained entirely separate from the other's. Mary Anne could never have written detached, carefully reasoned letters like Sarah's, even if her brother did once criticise Sarah's punctuation. Sarah could never have behaved as a pretty little flirt and rattle, counteracting the brooding and melancholy side of Disraeli's

temperament. Sarah was the patiently enduring daughter of a persecuted race, but Mary Anne came from the West, where girls are born for love, and adopted instinctively the rôle of Mary, while Sarah could only sustain that of Martha.

To most great men an audience is a necessity, and "poor Sa" made the perfect audience. Mary Anne could never have served as an audience. She was always much too close to him for that, for a certain gulf necessarily separates the actor from his audience.

Before setting out for the East, Disraeli had hinted to Murray that on his return he would have a manuscript to offer. Actually he wrote during his absence two novels, or most of two novels, *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy*. The first was published in May, 1832, and the second in March, 1833. He had to live, and fiction provided his only source of income.

As in the case of *Vivian Grey* and *The Young Duke* both are to an extent biographical. The perfume of the purple East lingers in *Alroy*, not surprisingly, seeing that he began the book in Jerusalem. He wrote of *Contarini Fleming* that he considered it the perfection of English prose and a *chef d'œuvre*. He added that it had not paid its expenses.

Since the father of Contarini Fleming, the hero, is a Saxon nobleman at a northern court, and his mother came of a great Venetian family, his origin bears a certain resemblance to Disraeli's, even if Isaac fell short of being a nobleman. As a child Contarini indulged in imaginary deeds of conquest and later felt the strong necessity of fame with no simultaneous faith in his own power. These words might equally have been written of Contarini's creator in his youth. Contarini also wrote, in a week, a novel called *Manstein* which corresponds more or less to Disraeli's completion of *Vivian Grey* in a few months. *Manstein* also was conceived in the high society vein, so much so that "various keys were handed about" for the identification of the originals on whom the characters were based, just as had happened in the case of Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*.

Contarini Fleming suffered from the same weakness as its author's previous works; as long as the autobiography was maintained it sustained the reader's interest, but obviously the biography could reach no conclusion, and as soon as Disraeli exhausted the material of his own personality the novel tailed off into an artificial ending. It contains well-known passages such as: "There is that within me which may yet mould the mind and fortunes of my race"—an inspired prophecy, and:

"Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory."

After some hesitation Murray agreed to publish *Contarini Fleming*, but the Murray-Disraeli association continued to be dogged by failure and the novel fell flat in spite of enthusiasm on the part of certain critics. Disraeli thereupon cursed the public, as many another author has done since. *Vivian Grey*, which now he considers dreadful, had sold by the thousand, and yet the public refused to look at *Contarini Fleming*, the perfection of English prose.

Depressed by the reception of this novel, Murray refused to risk money on *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, and it was given to the world accordingly by the invaluable Colburn. In *Alroy* Disraeli sought inspiration from the history of the Jewish race. The hero, descended from the House of David, was a Hebrew prince during the Captivity, and set himself the task of freeing his people. He succeeded and then fell a victim to his own ambition and died an edifying death as a martyr who refused to deny the faith of his forefathers.

It is all rather melodramatic stuff, typical of Disraeli on his romantic side. He had in a sense a dual personality, composed half of the brilliant man of affairs, half of the dreamy mystic. Moreover, the novel is written in a peculiar style which he described as "having recourse to rhythm," and its rhythm is just as eccentric in places as that which distinguishes modern, so-called "hot" music. One critic even went so far as to parody the recourse to rhythm; on the other hand, a lady declared that to read *Alroy* was like riding an Arab. In spite of all Colburn's efforts *Alroy* never developed into a best-seller.

Disraeli signified his return to England by removing his name from the books of Lincoln's Inn and taking his final farewell to the law in any shape or form. Owing to a complete restoration to health he felt full of courage and resource; true there were always his debts, but he had proved to himself that he could make a living by writing, and after all, as has been demonstrated by the financial ups and downs of nations since the Great War, the creditor is always in the hands of the debtor. It is the creditor's sad lot in life to coax, support and preserve the debtor in the hope that some day he may be able to settle in full, as Disraeli did eventually. Meanwhile nothing will be gained by hounding the debtor into the courts, or prison, where he cannot possibly earn anything either for his creditors or himself.

The return to England stands out as a critical point in Disraeli's life when he committed himself finally to a political career. On the day that he landed Parliament was prorogued, and in the event of a new election he determined to stand for Wycombe. He departed from Bradenham to London in the early part of 1832, settled down in Duke Street, still famous as an abode of gilded bachelors, and began his fascinating experience as a darling of drawing-rooms.

This introduction to the high life he had already depicted by the light of imagination in *Vivian Grey* and *The Young Duke* he achieved thanks to the influence of Lytton Bulwer, who had arrived already, through whose house in Hertford Street a coruscating procession of lovely ladies and distinguished noblemen sauntered by night, while his wife, the beautiful Rosina, decided more and more firmly that dogs interested her far more than people, and that writers above all other human beings in the world bored her completely to death.

Writers, alas, there had to be, and critics, and all the other raggle-taggle of literary life, for Bulwer kept up the Hertford Street house, and Rosina, and her dogs, by the exercise of his pen, and in consequence to hold a candle to the devil became necessary, but there were others: my lords Strangford and Mulgrave for instance; and Count d'Orsay, the French dandy, whose name forms such a scintillating example of fitting the punishment to the crime, the glittering boy-friend of the delightful Lady Blessington, both of whom were to mean so much to Disraeli.

More important still for an ambitious young man with his way still to make were the lovely ladies. At Bulwer's he met Lady Morgan, Mrs. Norton and others of the witty and beautiful. Mrs. Norton was so charmed by him that she asked him to her flat, and he arrived there in a black velvet coat, poppy coloured trousers with gold embroidery and a scarlet waistcoat. Albania and Cairo had much to answer for. Also he wore rings outside white kid gloves.

The Hon. Mrs. Norton was one of the three beautiful Sheridans, her sisters being Mrs. Blackwood and Lady Seymour, the last lovelier if possible than her sisters. They could scarcely have avoided being beautiful, given their pedigree.

Their grandfather, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist (*The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Critic*), made a romantic marriage with the beautiful singer, Elizabeth Linley, of Bath.

On account of her appearance various gentlemen pestered her

with their attentions, and Sheridan fought two duels on her account, besides removing her to a nunnery in France to put her beyond reach of an impetuous major in the interval.

Richard and Elizabeth Sheridan had a son, Tom, who in his turn married one of the beauties of the day, Caroline Henrietta, the second daughter of Colonel James Callander, by his third wife, Lady Elizabeth Helena.

Tom and Caroline were the parents of the three beautiful Sheridans whose looks came to them inevitably, seeing their mother and grandmother were, each in her day, reigning beauties.

Mrs. Norton had black hair coiled round her head and a Greek profile, blushed delightfully, and told naughty stories. She used to wave from her balcony every day to the aged Lord Melbourne on his way to the House. Lady Seymour had a distracting pallor. She was Queen of Beauty in the Eglinton Tournament, and heroine of the Shuckborough Correspondence, featured in the Press of the period. It runs as follows :

Letter I

"Lady Seymour presents her compliments to Lady Shuckborough, and would be obliged to her for the character of Mary Stedman, who states that she has lived twelve months and still is in Lady Shuckborough's establishment. Can Mary Stedman cook plain dishes well, make bread, and is she honest, good-tempered, sober, willing, and cleanly? Lady Seymour would be glad to know the reason why she leaves Lady Shuckborough's service. Direct under cover to Lord Seymour."

Letter II

"Lady Shuckborough presents her compliments to Lady Seymour. Her Ladyship's note, dated October 28th, only reached her yesterday, November 3rd. Lady Shuckborough was unacquainted with the name of the kitchenmaid until mentioned by Lady Seymour, as it is her custom neither to apply for or to give characters of the under-servants, this being always done by the housekeeper, Mrs. Couch, and this was well known to the young woman.

"Therefore Lady Shuckborough is surprised at her referring any lady to her for a character. Lady Shuckborough having a professed cook as well as a housekeeper in her establishment it is not very likely she herself should know

anything of the abilities or merits of the under-servants; therefore she is unable to answer Lady Seymour's note. Lady Shuckborough cannot imagine Mary Stedman to be capable of cooking for any but the servants' hall."

Letter III

"Lady Seymour presents her compliments to Lady Shuckborough, and begs she will order her housekeeper, Mrs. Pouch, to send the girl's character; otherwise another young woman will be sought for elsewhere, as Lady Seymour's children cannot remain without their dinner because Lady Shuckborough, keeping a 'professed cook and housekeeper,' thinks a knowledge of the details of her establishment beneath her notice.

"Lady Seymour understood from Stedman that, in addition to her other talents, she was actually capable of dressing food for the little Shuckboroughs to partake of when hungry."

(Here appeared a caricature of the little Shuckboroughs gobbling, with Mary Stedman in the background.)

Letter IV

"MADAM:

"Lady Shuckborough has directed me to acquaint you she declines answering your note, the vulgarity of which is beneath contempt; and although it may be the characteristic of the Sheridans to be vulgar and witty, it is not that of a 'lady,' unless she happens to have been born in a garret and bred in a kitchen.

"Mary Stedman informs me that you only require a girl who can cook a mutton chop; if so, I apprehend that Mary Stedman or any other scullion will be found fully equal to cook for, or manage the establishment of, the Queen of Beauty.

"I am your Ladyship's, etc.,

"ELIZABETH COUCH

"(*not* Pouch.)"

Thus it can be taken for granted that the society of the beautiful Sheridans never lacked sparkle. Their mother, the Colonel's daughter by his third wife, still survived, with the reputation of being the most beautiful woman in the world

except her daughters. Disraeli found himself more and more in their company. They were lovely, amusing creatures who pleased themselves whom they knew and what they did. They breathed a freer air than any to which he had been accustomed so far. They exemplified the gospel that a lady can do and say anything she chooses merely beacuse she *is* a lady.

He felt suddenly like a man let out of prison. In this atmosphere he could lose the self-consciousness and sense of inferiority which had oppressed him since his earliest years. These were the people and surroundings for which he had always longed, god-like young men and lovely women leading untrammelled lives in magnificent houses, amusing, delightful, and above all free.

There was something prophetic in that dream ancestry of his because he found himself far more at home among aristocrats than among the middle-class surroundings of his home and upbringing. In those days, as now, the middle class distinguished itself by a peculiar dinginess, both mental and physical, in dress, decorations, and surroundings. It fettered its social life with unbreakable conventions and then envied the upper and lower classes their less regulated existence. The upper classes pleased themselves by right of might, the lower classes were so low that they could not very well sink lower; the middle class while not powerful enough to please itself maintained a snobbish respectability which permitted its members to despise the lower classes and enjoy, it hoped, the esteem of the aristocracy, whereas the aristocracy never has troubled about the middle class and never will. Fresh blood flows into the aristocracy to-day chiefly from the lower classes who have succeeded commercially; in 1832 fresh blood flowed into it from the fighting services in time of war, Wellington and St. Vincent being two examples.

The London into the drawing-rooms of whose Mayfair Disraeli now penetrated was village-like compared to the London of to-day. The old wall and gates had only been taken down in 1760, the year in which Mary Anne's father was born, gas was first used for street-lighting in 1807, and the first omnibus only appeared in 1829. Long after 1832 gentlemen still used their horses as a means of getting about Town. Did not Lord Palmerston once apologise to Queen Victoria because, having mounted his horse to ride to the Paddington Station (for Windsor) Lord Palmerston, thinking about this and that, absent-mindedly rode in the wrong direction and found himself by mistake at the

Nine Elms station, not the least use to a noble statesman wishing to proceed in the direction of Windsor ?

Noble lords and ladies travelled in their coaches or barouches, and specimens of their state carriages may still be seen in the establishments of the older coachbuilding firms, who now construct motor bodies. It is not obvious how the lower classes could have travelled at all unless they walked, so a man must needs have lived near his work. This led to decentralisation and the community spirit rather than to large dormitory districts as to-day where the inhabitants of dormitory suburbs have no local interest or link in common.

Entertaining took place in houses instead of restaurants, though even in 1832 a beautiful and charming lady could attract friends and admirers to small premises, for the Hon. Mrs. Norton lived in a small flat at Storey's Gate and her drawing-room was microscopic and invariably crowded. Disraeli became greatly sought after as a witty, amusing, unattached young man, for of such is the kingdom of hostesses. He found himself making his way easily in the highest set, and notes that envy, malice, etc., are absent from that favoured circle, where they only wanted to admire and be amused. The highest set christened him "Dizzy," and "Dizzy" he remained to Bulwer and Mary Anne and everyone else who knew him well for the rest of his days.

Thus, in due course, on April 27th, 1832, he met, at Bulwer's very brilliant soirée, Mary Anne, a pretty little woman, a flirt, and a rattle.

Apart from the fact that she was married to Wyndham Lewis it could not be called by any stretch of imagination a case of love at first sight. Disraeli had a further distance to travel and much more experience to gain before he could recognise the virtues, the charm, and the understanding of Mary Anne. Indeed, the story goes that when, subsequently, at the Rothschilds' his hostess asked him to take Mrs. Wyndham Lewis in to dinner, he exclaimed: "Oh, anything rather than that insufferable woman! However, great is Allah!" and obeyed under protest.

This signifies the perfection of female cunning on the part of Mary Anne. He interested her, but she understood that in many ways at that particular stage he was intolerable to a woman. Brilliant he might be, but also conceited, a vain popinjay who so far rested his reputation on a few novels. Mary Anne foresaw his possibilities, felt a deep interest in him, and yet knew that if ever he was to justify his promise a little emotional surgery must

be performed on him by some woman. Evidently she performed it, hence the cry of wounded vanity: "Anything rather than that insufferable woman!" Yet he remembered, as she intended him to remember, or his reply might have been: "Mrs. Wyndham Lewis? Who is Mrs. Wyndham Lewis? I never heard of her."

Like Sara Austen, Mary Anne foretold to herself his future, but as yet she could do nothing to help him. For the time being he must make his own mistakes. Later she could, at the propitious moment, interest Wyndham in this gifted young man. Wyndham, after all, was rich and kind and amenable, and a little stupid perhaps, a very satisfactory combination in a husband if ever one wanted him to do something on behalf of a brilliant young man.

Mary Anne was now forty and had been married to Wyndham Lewis for seventeen years. These are significant facts.

At the age of forty a woman who has been married for seventeen years is prone to look round for a new interest in life, on the principle of now or never. In the nature of things she will not remain at the zenith of her attractiveness very much longer. If ever she is to interest another man sufficiently to influence his career, it must be in the near future. Obviously the man in the case will be considerably younger than her husband.

There is not the slightest suggestion that when Mary Anne saw Disraeli driving in the park with a lady her emotions were remotely comparable to those of David when he saw Bathsheba washing herself. She declared herself that she was extremely happily married to Wyndham Lewis, and her ultimate hesitation when Disraeli wanted to marry her precludes any blind passion on her side. Her interest in Disraeli seems to have been mental rather than physical, except that she recognised in him a young lion of the period, a young lion of twenty-eight, moreover. Wyndham Lewis, on the contrary, was fifty-two, a staid backbencher, politically a very average person. At forty Mary Anne could not possibly have looked or seemed anything like her age, as witness Disraeli's expression: "a pretty little woman, a flirt." a young man of twenty-eight, particularly a dandiacal young man, the bosom friend of the beautiful Sheridans, does not usually call someone of forty a pretty little woman.

Having caused him to be introduced at Rosina Bulwer's, Mary Anne proceeded to apply all the strategy and tactics with the knowledge of which West-country girls are born, added to an

experience of men spread over some twenty-three years. How easy it is to picture her telling Disraeli solemnly with the gravest expression in her beautiful eyes, and secret giggles, that she liked silent melancholy men, and Disraeli, in his vanity commenting: "I have no doubt of it!"

Surely the Lord delivered him into her hand that day!

On June 7th, 1832, the royal assent was given to the Reform Bill, and Disraeli travelled from London to High Wycombe in order to canvass the electors for the forthcoming election. He was still vague as to his political party. In a recent political work he had written: "I am neither Whig nor Tory. My politics are described by one word, and that word is England." A young politician could hardly have taken his stand on a platform more vague, for what Party would deny that it stood for England amongst other things? Finally he contested Wycombe as a Radical, declaring that Toryism was worn out and he could not condescend to be a Whig. This, in the founder of the Conservative Party, the descendant of the Tories, seems even more remarkable than for Gladstone, subsequently a great Liberal statesman, to stand in the first place for Newark at the invitation of the Tory Duke of Newcastle.

Disraeli's opponent was a Colonel Grey, afterwards, when General Grey, to become famous as Queen Victoria's private secretary. In that capacity he was called upon, years later, to give his views as to the advisability of making Mary Anne a peeress in her own right, a step her husband, when Prime Minister, had begged Queen Victoria to take.

Colonel Grey, a simple soldier, made a very poor speech to the electors, but Disraeli fulfilled Mary Anne's confidence in his political future by standing, the perfect dandy, on the porch of the "Red Lion," at Wycombe, beside the lion itself, and making a magnificent speech.

Pointing to the head of the lion he announced: "When the poll is declared I shall be there," and then, pointing to the tail of the lion, "but my opponent will be there." Unfortunately his prophecy turned out to be inaccurate, for Colonel Grey was returned by a majority of eight votes.

After this defeat Disraeli retired to Bradenham accompanied by Bulwer. A general election would occur shortly, and the constituency needed to be nursed. Disraeli's main theme was the betterment of the people. He produced a marvellous piece of rhetoric featuring: "The farmer in doubt, the shipowner in despair, our merchants without trade, and our manufacturers

without markets, the revenue declining, and the army increased, the wealthy hoarding their useless capital, and pauperism prostrate in our once-contented cottages."

In fact, it all sounds exactly like the condition of affairs to-day. Unfortunately these glowing words fell on deaf ears. At the next election a Whig, named Smith, headed the poll. Colonel Grey came next, and Disraeli at the bottom.

Various occupations now engaged him. He went on to Bath with Bulwer and began a new novel, but February found him back in London listening to Bulwer adjourn the House of Commons. He also heard what he calls Macaulay's best speech, and assures Sarah at the same time that he could floor them all. He had sat next Sir Robert Peel at a men's dinner-party during the previous year and alleged that Peel attacked his turbot mostly with his knife. Peel behaved in a friendly manner, little dreaming what the future was to bring forth.

By the spring of 1833 a year had passed since Disraeli's first attempt to enter Parliament and he still remained as far as ever from his goal, chiefly because, in opinions, he represented no one but himself and could not fall into line with either of the great Parties.

The year 1832 proved politically disastrous for both Mary Anne's husbands, the existing and the prospective. Wyndham Lewis, his Aldeburgh constituency extinguished alike by the tide and the Reform Bill, stood as a Tory for Maidstone, which continued to return two Whigs, who defeated Wyndham by forty-eight votes. All Mary Anne's charm and persuasiveness failed to lure Maidstone from its persistent Whiggery, or perhaps Wyndham failed to spend enough money on getting himself returned.

For the post-war generation which does not even remember the "prisoner-when-arrested-clung-to-the-railings" tactics of Mrs. Pankhurst and her suffragettes immediately before the war, a glance at the electoral system of the early nineteenth century can scarcely lack interest. In 1831, before the passing of the Reform Act, there existed both county members and borough members. County members were elected by freeholders of land bringing in at least forty shillings a year. There was only one voting place for a county, so that a candidate, as well as bribing his voters, had to take them to the voting place, board and lodge them while they remained there, and take them back home again afterwards. Inevitably gang warfare took place between his supporters and their opponents who picketed the hustings in a

very rough manner. Disraeli, deep in debt, could not possibly afford all the outlay in money this entailed.

The representation of boroughs sounds like a fairy tale, for some were represented and some were not. In open boroughs the electors numbered a favoured few, being sometimes certain people with a property qualification, sometimes the mayor and corporation. In closed and pocket boroughs the seat became private property and even bribery was useless. There, unless a candidate knew the right people, he stood no chance whatever of being elected. Unlike Gladstone at Newark, Disraeli had no pocket borough at his disposal.

Elections, in short, were a matter either of pure bribery or pure jobbery, which explains his repeated failures to secure a seat. Not until Wyndham Lewis jobbed him in at Maidstone could he hope for success.

If he made no progress towards Westminster, at least he shone more and more in drawing-rooms. At that period Almack's, a species of private dance club, was the chief meeting-place of society. Great and beautiful ladies ruled Almack's with a rod of iron, and breeches and silk stockings were *de rigueur* for gentlemen. The Duke of Wellington himself once tried to gain admittance when wearing trousers, but even in his case the inflexible rule could not be broken, and he departed into the night. Disraeli duly crashed Almack's, under the ægis of Lady Tankerville, and thereafter could consider himself to have arrived.

At this stage Mary Anne and her husband begin to enter more and more into his life. He lunched with them on the occasion of a review in Hyde Park, which their house overlooked, but evidently Mary Anne occupied his thoughts to a very small degree, because he suggests to Sarah the idea of marriage with another lady, adding that he would never marry for love, because all his friends who marry for love or beauty either beat their wives or live apart from them.

It may or may not have been the influence of Almack's. To counteract Almack's there is a record of his meeting at Mary Anne's house, Joseph Bonaparte, and his beautiful daughter. One would assume that for the moment Almack's found itself eclipsed. The spoiled Disraeli, going to see a new play by Sheridan Knowles with Mrs. Norton, makes the comment that public entertainments are tedious, but ni a private box with a fair companion less so. Even at that, this period sees him thinking a great deal of marriage. He seems to have realised that rooms in

LYTTON BULWER, AFTERWARDS 1ST BARON LYTTON (1803–1873)
Author of novels *Pelham, Last Days of Pompeii, Rienzi*, etc. A great dandy and friend of Disraeli.
It was Rosina, Lytton Bulwer's wife, who [illegible]

Duke Street, though well enough in their way, afforded a public man no background. He must have, to use the expression of the period, an establishment, and a beautiful, charming wife to sit at the head of his table and wear his jewels, coax his adversaries, and fascinate his friends.

This is what might be called without offence Disraeli's self-advertising period. His letters to Sarah, in the sylvan solitude of Bradenham with her calm, devoted mother and her studious father gradually going blind, and above all Tita, in whose arms Byron died, whom Disraeli brought home from his tour of the East and planted on his father, glitter with noble and fashionable names. There are the St. Maurs, and Lady Westmoreland, Lord Clements, Lady Aldboro, Lucien Bonaparte, Lady Cork, the Prince of Moskova, Lord Castlereagh, Lord Wilton, and many more. Beyond all, at this period, he felt it incumbent on him to write an epic poem.

In spite of that he could bring himself to declare that all men of high imagination, of whom no doubt he considered himself one, are indolent.

He said that he first conceived the poem in the plains of Troy. He would. No epic poem of Disraeli's at this period, a feverish, rhapsodic, exalted period, could possibly have been conceived in less important surroundings than the plains of Troy. It was, in the event, a perfectly dreadful poem. Still in contact with the divine Sara Austen, he consults her about it. The problem of the hour is a sou'wester. Whence does it blow, and where? How delighted Sara must have been to resolve the problem. Her fascinating protégé still needed her. Accordingly, given Almack's and the glitter of society with which he now found himself familiar, she was a woman among women.

He dined with her and her husband and read them the first canto, dressed in his fantastic best, with ruffles to his sleeves and red rosettes on his shoes.

The poem was published in 1834. It proved a complete fiasco. For instance:

> "Divine Equality, thou art a God
> Omnipotent indeed! Thy sacred fire
> Burns now in sacred temples not to fall
> Like thine old shrines; yet who can e'er forget
> Whose soul indeed thy noble faith inflames,
> Thy broken altar on Athena's hill!"

Almost anyone with an ear for metre could continue in this strain by the yard.

The Duke of Wellington expressed his conviction of feeling flattered by the author's desire of dedicating the epic poem to him, adding that twenty years previously he had decided he would never give formal permission for a dedication. If the author in the teeth of this information persisted in dedicating the poem, then, Heaven help him, the Duke could do no more. He had the honour to be the author's most obedient humble servant.

The poem was not dedicated to Wellington. The next news is that at someone's ball Disraeli dined off gold and danced in the sculpture gallery; and now we come to Count D'Orsay and Lady Blessington.

Hers is a romantic story. She was born the daughter of a magistrate in Ireland who made her marry a rich insane husband when only fifteen years old. Lord Blessington was also rich, and a little peculiar, a man of much property, and the father of two motherless daughters. The unfortunate situation of a beautiful young girl married to a madman excited his pity and sympathy, and in the end he suggested bringing her to England, arranging a divorce, and marrying her; and so it all happened.

The story now becomes more and more strange. The Blessingtons went to Italy, and with them travelled Count D'Orsay, a Frenchman, the fine flower of all the dandies who eventually obtained for himself the influence on English society once held by George Brummell. It is said that he became Lady Blessington's lover, but Lord Blessington developed such a deep regard for him that he made a will in D'Orsay's favour, bequeathing most of his money to this handsome young nobleman on the understanding that he married whichever of Blessington's daughters he preferred. D'Orsay accordingly married Lady Harriet in 1827 when she was only fifteen, but gossip declared that he promised Lady Blessington never to consummate the marriage.

Bulwer said her attitude to D'Orsay was purely maternal, and in any case by the time Disraeli met her the lady had reached middle age, though her beauty remained. Great ladies did not consider her very nice to know. She lived in Seamore Place and her drawing-room overlooked the Park. Disraeli loved it for that reason. This was the second of his lady friends with a drawing-room overlooking the Park. Being ostracised by her own sex she entertained a great deal, and her house formed a rendezvous for young men of mark in the political and literary

worlds like Bulwer and Disraeli. The latter became a great friend not only of her ladyship but also of D'Orsay.

It was an age when brilliant talkers were not only allowed to talk but actually were listened to. A visiting American journalist, one of the gossip writers of the period, made a pen-picture for his paper of a dinner party at Lady Blessington's at which he was present, for even then the peerage had discovered the uses of gossip-writers. After a time she made an opening for Disraeli, and "he burst at once, without preface, into that fiery vein of eloquence which, hearing many times after, and always with new delight has stamped Disraeli in my mind as the most wonderful talker I have ever had the fortune to meet . . . Add to this that Disraeli's is the most intellectual face in England —pale, regular, and overshadowed with the most luxuriant masses of raven black hair."

Evidently it had recovered since that exceeding bitter cry of his from Gibraltar that it was falling out.

D'Orsay also sparkled.

That is a picture by an unprejudiced foreign observer of Disraeli in society, the man whom Mary Anne from her window in Grosvenor Place had marked down as a singularly interesting creature, who was inviting him to her parties sure already in her heart that in him she beheld one of the coming men. Disraeli himself tells Sarah a story, quoted by several of his biographers, illustrating his position in the world. The date is July, 1834.

"A good story! On Monday, I think, Lady Sykes was at Lady Cork's, and Lord Carrington paid her a visit.

Lady C.: Do you know young Disraeli. (Note.—Disraeli's age was thirty.)

Lord C.: Hem! Why? Eh?

Lady C.: Why, he is your neighbour, isn't he, eh?

Lord C.: His father is.

Lady C.: I know that. His father is one of my dearest friends. I dote on the Disraelis.

Lord C.: The young man is a very extraordinary sort of person. The father I like; he is very quiet and respectable.

Lady C.: Why do you think the young man is extraordinary? I should not think that *you* could taste him.

Lord C.: He is a great agitator. Not that he troubles us much *now*. He is never amongst us now. I believe he has gone abroad again.

Lady C. (*literatim*) : You old fool ! Why, he sent me this book this morning. You need not look at it; you can't understand it. It is the finest book ever written. Gone abroad, indeed! Why, he is the best *ton* in London. There is not a party that goes down without him. The Duchess of Hamilton says there is nothing like. Lady Londsdale would give her head and shoulders for him. He would not dine at your house if you were to ask him. He does not care for people because they are lords; he must have fashion, or beauty, or wit, or something: and you are a very good sort of person but you are nothing more."

How it must all have thrilled Sarah, mourning her dead lover among the beechwoods of Bradenham, and pouring a double portion of her affection on her miraculous brother in consequence.

At Mrs. Norton's house that year he was introduced to Lord Melbourne, who behaved with great cordiality and inquired what was Mr. Disraeli's ambition. "To be Prime Minister," came the startling reply, and Lord Melbourne, having recovered from his surprise, reed plisolemnly: "No chance of that in our time." He then explained at some length that after Lord Grey, an old man, gave up the premiership, Stanley must inevitably succeed him. Stanley could then remain in office practically as long as he liked. No doubt Mr. Disraeli would do very well in politics, but there was no use asking for the moon.

In 1848, Melbourne, in his old age, hearing that Disraeli was to lead the Tory Party in the House, made the astounded comment:

"By God, the fellow will do it, yet!"

Also in 1834 there was Henrietta.

Perhaps if there had been no Henrietta, Disraeli might never have settled down with Mary Anne, twelve years older than himself, in which case history would have needed to be re-written because lacking Mary Anne he could never have risen to the heights which he reached ultimately. Not the least remarkable of his achievements was to marry the right woman.

Ideas of marriage did not enter into the association with Henrietta, who already possessed a husband. Disraeli merely loved her passionately. It is even unlikely that she would have wished to marry him had she been free. Henrietta was one of those perfect companions who take a man's life from the shadows

into the sunlight and then, passing on, leave him to drift back into the shadows. The perfection of such as Henrietta is too rare, a lover's joy in her too acute, for the association to endure. From the serene safety of old age men look back and recall them with a smile and tell themselves: "My God, how happy I was then!" So Disraeli, ambitious and aspiring, found time to exclaim even while the lovely days lasted: "What a happy, or rather amusing, society Henrietta and myself commanded this year."

It is a hall-mark of the perfect love affair that while it lasts life is not only happy but amusing. With his whole being tuned to a pitch it never attained before nor will again, the lover lives a year in an hour, contrives all his most brilliant sayings, finds in the most trivial matters a fascination he can never know in after years, or after months, when the spell is broken. Perhaps Disraeli's real year of triumphant life began in 1834, before ever he entered Parliament, the year when he loved Henrietta.

There were delicious suppers after the opera and river parties, and garden parties. The particular circle in which they moved, very exclusive, the only passports to it beauty and wit, knew they were in love, and enjoyed them as much as they enjoyed one another. It could never have happened among the middle class, but then Disraeli had quitted the middle class for ever, and Henrietta never even knew it.

They loved one another during that brief and brilliant period of his life which is radiant with the society of beautiful women, when, at a fancy dress ball, Lady Chesterfield was a Sultana and Mrs. Anson a Greek, with her own hair lower than the calf of her leg, Lady Londonderry wore a dress embroidered with emeralds and diamonds from top to toe, and Mrs. Norton and Mrs. Blackwood, two of the divine Sheridans, were beautiful Greeks also. And then to crown everything "Lyndhurst gave a supper to eighty of the most supreme *ton* and beauty," very nearly ruining the fancy dress ball by taking away the cream of the guests.

In honour of Henrietta, Disraeli wrote *Henrietta Temple*, which is a love story. The first volume was begun in 1834 at the height of his passion for the real Henrietta. Time passed, love waned, politics beckoned, head won dominion over heart, and in 1836 he could set down dispassionately this saddest of all his recorded statements:

"Parted for ever from Henrietta . . . Concluded *Henrietta*

Temple, of which one volume had been written three years. It was published early in December, and was very successful."

And that was Henriettas's end, and the end of that hunting. Which tired of the other who knows? Perhaps Henrietta went, singing, to a new lover. In any case, her contribution to history had been made. She had inspired this passage in the book named for her:

> "There is no love but love at first sight. This is the transcendent and surpassing offispring of sheer and unpolluted sympathy. All other is the illegitimate result of observation, of reflection, of compromise, of comparison, of expediency. The passions that endure flash like the lightning; they scorch the soul but it is warmed for ever."

So Henrietta warmed Disraeli's soul for ever, and moved on, and left the way clear to Mary Anne. After all, Mary Anne too had her tribute, in the dedication to *Sybil*. Besides, Henrietta didn't matter to Mary Anne, who was Disraeli's wife for thirty years. Henrietta passed him as April passes, with face made out of a rose.

In the summer and autumn of 1834 he was ill. This illness may well have been brought on by the acuteness of his passion for Henrietta and his feverishly social days and nights. Lady Blessington, a wise and experienced woman of the world, seems to have taken this view. She told him that authors are the least controlled of human beings when they fall in love. As ever he fled to the peace of Bradenham in order to recover, spent two months on a sofa and found himself completely restored. Thereafter politics took the foremost place in his thoughts.

He now enjoyed the interest of Lord Lyndhurst, whom he had met at dinner at Henrietta's. Lyndhurst considered that the day of the Whigs was over. Disraeli's Radical phase also was nearly over. In his third election at Wycombe, which he lost, as has been recorded already, he advocated that Radicals and Tories should unite, making, it must be supposed, remarkably strange bedfellows. After the election he received a letter of sympathy from the Duke of Wellington, who certainly was no Radical. It is not strange to find that a little later he was put up for the Carlton Club, then, as now, the ark of the Tory, or Conservative, covenant.

Thus, at last, he had decided on which side of the political

fence he should come down, and could anticipate a reasonable chance of the career in Parliament which he desired.

In January, 1835, a dramatic meeting took place. The Chancellor gave a dinner which Disraeli attended, where among others he noted the presence of "young Gladstone," who did not make much impression, for Disraeli remembered chiefly that they had a swan, very white and tender, stuffed with truffles which he considered the most interesting feature of the entertainment.

He told his father triumphantly in April that the Whigs could not form a Government. Pretty women as ever were pulling political strings, and he spent a whole afternoon with Mrs. Norton, Lord Melbourne's great friend. Finally Melbourne formed a purely Whig Cabinet containing what Disraeli calls rather rudely all the old hacks, among whom he includes Palmerston. Disraeli himself dashed off to Taunton to fight a hopeless battle in the Tory interest. He drove himself to the point of exhaustion, and wore during his exertions a bottle-green frock coat, an extravagant waistcoat covered with glittering chains, and fancy pattern pantaloons. He seems to have suffered from a weakness for chains. Bulwer once asked him:

"Why so many chains, Dizzy? Are you practising to be Lord Mayor, or what?"

D'Orsay warned him to be careful what he said at Taunton as a so-recent convert to Toryism, and he delivered a long explanatory speech, treading on broken glass with all the delicacy of Agag. In the result he lost the election by 170 votes, but won tremendous local popularity, and the Conservatives in those parts gave him a triumph afterwards, concluding with a banquet. At this affair he crystallised finally his political creed: democratic Toryism, a hereditary monarchy, an Established Church.

There followed his dramatic quarrel with O'Connell.

Disraeli at Taunton poured scorn on the understanding between the Whigs and O'Connell and was misreported to have called O'Connell an incendiary and a traitor. O'Connell, a wild Irishman, replied in a speech at Dublin. He called Disraeli an egregious liar, a liar both in action and words, and a living lie, adding that the British Empire was degraded by tolerating a miscreant of this abominable description. He possessed, O'Connell continued, all the requisites of perfidy, selfishness, depravity, and want of principle to qualify him for becoming a Tory. There were many most respectable Jews, but, as in every other people,

some of the lowest and most disgusting grade of moral turpitude:

> "And of these I look upon Mr. Disraeli as the worst. He has just the qualities of the impenitent thief on the Cross, and I verily believe, if Mr. Disraeli's family herald were to be examined, and his genealogy traced, the same personage would be discovered to be the heir-at-law of the exalted individual to whom I allude."

These few words naturally annoyed Disraeli very much. Therefore he wrote to O'Connell's son challenging him to a duel. O'Connell himself had once killed a man in a duel and sworn never to fight again. The son replied that really he could not be responsible for everything his father said, and so Disraeli, like so many other politicians since his day, sent a letter to the Press. It was not addressed to the usual anonymous correspondent, but to O'Connell himself. It began:

> "Although you have long placed yourself out of the pale of civilisation, still I am one who will not be insulted, even by a Yahoo, without chastising it."

Here is another scarifying passage:

> "With regard to your taunts as to my want of success in my election contests, permit me to remind you that I had nothing to appeal to but the good sense of the people. No threatening skeletons canvassed for me; a death's head and cross-bones were not blazoned on my banners. My pecuniary resources, too, were limited; I am not one of those public beggars that we see swarming with their obtrusive boxes in the chapels of your creed, nor am I in possession of a princely revenue wrung from a starving race of fanatical slaves."

With such pretty manners and such refined language were politics conducted in the 1830's. The papers published Disraeli's letter. He and O'Connell more or less patched up a peace long afterward.

An important event occurred that year (1835). Lord Lyndhurst visited Bradenham. Two more occurred in the year following. Disraeli wrote a series of letters to *The Times* signed "Runnymede," addressed to members of the Government. The language recalled in many instances that of the letter to O'Connell, but there is a delicious description of Lord Melbourne "sauntering over the destinies of a nation and lounging away the glories

of an Empire." The letters created much stir and Lyndhurst wrote his congratulations to "My dear Dissy."

The second was his election as a member of the Carlton Club. In February he wrote to Lady Blessington asking her to canvass for his election. Lords Lyndhurst and Chandos were on his side, but he expected opposition and her influence was worth a great deal. In March he announced triumphantly to Sarah his election. Evidently Lady Blessington's influence was not without its effect.

In the winter of 1836 more of his articles appeared in *The Times*, but when he wished to contribute verse, Barnes, the editor, delivered a masterly criticism of Disraeli as a poet.

"The tone is a high one, but the sound is monotonous," said Barnes. No one ever spoke a truer word.

We now come to *Henrietta Temple*, which was published by the inestimable Colburn late in 1836, and *Venetia*.

They were not, wrote Disraeli, political works, but they would commemorate feelings more enduring than public passions, and they were written with care, and some delight. He dedicated them to D'Orsay and Lord Lyndhurst. The dedication to Lyndhurst is understandable because Lyndhurst was a man and a statesman. D'Orsay, if we put aside his personal charm, amounts to nothing more than a he-butterfly, a gambler, and generally speaking the gilded toy of an idle hour. He wrote Disraeli the most charming letters in his own French, and his influence on the world for good, except as a tailor's dummy, is possibly zero. Disraeli considered that, placed in a public position, D'Orsay would have displayed a courage, a judgment, and a commanding intelligence which would have ranked him with the leaders of mankind, but what grounds has Disraeli for the statement? All we know is that Lord Blessington left D'Orsay a great deal of money, and D'Orsay accomplished nothing at all beyond living next door to Lady Blessington, launching male fashions, getting into debt, and making himself agreeable to a number of pretty ladies. A bus driver is more admirable, because the average bus driver supports a wife and family, and all bus drivers, married or single, perform a useful public service.

Lord Lyndhurst deserves his dedication as well as anyone. He was born with a golden spoon in his mouth, but apart from that, as a man of character he served his country when it was in his power to remain a dilettante idler, like D'Orsay.

Disraeli had begun *Henrietta Temple* in 1834 when his love

for the real Henrietta was at its height. The years between its commencement and its date of publication, in 1836, were filled up with the society of Henrietta, the lovely Sheridans, and their circle, and political plans which resulted in nothing very tangible. Ultimately, after the final break with the real Henrietta, his financial affairs were at such a crisis that money had to be made somehow, and so in despair he returned to the unfinished manuscript of *Henrietta Temple*, completed it, and sold it to Colburn for the best price he had ever obtained from this faithful publisher.

No doubt the names he chose for his characters suited the taste of the times, but to-day they sound unbelievably artificial. The hero of *Henrietta Temple*, Ferdinand Armine, was stationed with his regiment at Malta, where Disraeli had met Ponsonby the Governor and worn a rainbow sash and white trousers. Ferdinand was a spendthrift, so that the author could easily draw him from life. Ferdinand discovered that he had been disinherited in favour of his cousin, Katherine Grandison, returned to England, and decided to marry her and keep the money in the family. This device is as old as fiction, and will continue to be used by hard-pressed writers until fiction ceases to be written.

Naturally the brilliant Ferdinand, a handsome young soldier, succeeded with Katherine, but later on he met Henrietta and fell genuinely in love, as she with him. Thus matters became very awkward; he was engaged to one girl and in love with another. Worse, Henrietta and her father discovered the existence of the engagement, and she parted with Ferdinand. Little as we might believe it, Henrietta also became a great heiress—Ferdinand seemed to make a habit of heiresses—and later engaged herself to Lord Montfort, heir to a dukedom. Ferdinand sank lower and lower, bowed under his load of debt, Katherine repudiated the engagement like a wise girl, and his heart was broken for love of Henrietta.

To the rescue of Ferdinand in these unfortunate circumstances Disraeli brought Count Alcibiades de Mirabel, the bearer of another of those names which would hardly appeal to the modern public. The Count is really D'Orsay, Disraeli's great friend, done from life. Under the guidance of Count Alcibiades the ancient expedience of swapping lovers and girls was resorted to; Lord Montfort, who would be a duke some day, paired off with Miss Grandison, and Ferdinand regained his Henrietta. Count Alcibiades improved the occasion with a few weighty remarks and all ended for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

It sounds like the very worst kind of transatlantic talking picture, but the earlier part of the novel celebrates first love in a genuine and touching fashion. One passage has been quoted, but there is also this:

> "Amid the gloom and travail of existence suddenly to behold a beautiful being, and as instantaneously to feel an overwhelming conviction that with that fair form for ever our destiny must be entwined; that there is no more joy but in her joy, no sorrow but when she grieves; that in her sigh of love, her smile of fondness, hereafter is all bliss; to feel our flaunty ambition fade away like a shrivelled gourd before her vision; to feel fame a juggle and posterity a lie; and to be prepared at once, for this great object, to forfeit and fling away all former hopes, ties, schemes, views; to violate in her favour every duty of society; this is a lover, and this is love!"

Better sentences have been written, but if we follow the author through this verbal counterpart of the Hampton Court maze, the statement rings true. The later portion of the novel, written after Disraeli's parting with the real Henrietta, fails to reach this pitch of emotion.

All the pretty ladies in society wept copiously over the book. Lady Wilton, down at Strathfieldsaye—the Duke's place—cried so much that she aroused the interest of her fellow-guests in the book. Bulwer reported that he heard of nothing but tears, tears, tears. Colburn rejoiced, for that remarkable man knew well that a woman loves nothing better than a book which will provide her with a really good cry; and it was to women readers that he looked for success in the case of a fashionable writer like Disraeli, who at that era combined for women of the highest *ton* —to use his own expression—the charm enjoyed to-day by Fredric March, Ronald Colman, Leslie Howard and Maurice Chevalier. Moreover, Disraeli was better looking than these favourites and much more intelligent.

D'Orsay wrote a most beautiful letter to "*Mon cher* Dis" thanking him for the dedication. Very naturally, bathed in the tears of the beautiful among the highest *ton*, *Henrietta Temple* soared to success.

Perhaps Mary Anne read the book also; if so it is almost certain that she would have enjoyed it, for, born in the West, she must have aroused a great deal of first love in her time, but it is to be doubted if she wept. That tip-tilted nose and those

deceptively innocent eyes suggest a great sense of humour; besides, no one without a sense of humour could ever have lived happily with Disraeli.

It was now four years since Rosina had introduced him by Mary Anne's particular desire. Four years meant a good deal at her time of life, especially when she faced the competition of Mrs. Norton, Mrs. Black, and Lady Seymour and others equally beautiful. Still, at this time Mary Anne was not in love with him and possessed, as always, a heart of gold. She moved, as he did, among the very highest *ton*, though her section of it lacked the feverishness of his, and she would never have asked poor Lady Blessington to No. 1 Grosvenor Gate. She watched his career with wise and kindly eyes. Politically speaking it did not go very well, but then what else could one expect of a man who wanted to please himself irrespective of the great Parties? Aside from a great Party which might choose to adopt him he had little influence; there was no Duke to present him with a seat as in the case of Gladstone. Everyone knew him to be in debt and consequently unable to buy votes. Mary Anne, an old hand at electioneeering by now, knew to a farthing, for she was good at accounts, exactly what a vote cost in all Wyndham Lewis' constituencies.

It is one thing for a man to buy votes with the coal mines of Glamorganshire behind him, and quite another to attempt to win them by spell-binding oratory and the publicity value of a dandified appearance. Mary Anne, who declared on one occasion that she hated politics, but understood them very well for all that, sighed for her young lion, though he was not so young nowadays, shook her ringletted head and dismissed him for the moment with a wave of her slender, intelligent hand. He would have to learn, and wisdom only grew from experience.

When the news came of his contesting Taunton in the Tory interest her lovely eyes opened a thought more widely. That, of course, made all the difference. One heard that Lyndhurst and Chandos were behind him now, and even the Duke of Wellington expressed polite interest. Besides, he had stood as a Tory, and Wyndham also was a Tory, and Maidstone could not, if there was any justice under Heaven, go on returning Whigs for ever.

Unfortunately the lion was being hunted mercilessly at this period. Disraeli's debts positively haunted him. No wonder he could write in *Henrietta Temple* that debt has a small beginning but a giant's growth and strength.

In spite of his race and ancestry he had no money-sense at all in his own affairs, though ironically enough in later life he was to become a wise and statesmanlike Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had slipped into debt as a youth during the ill-starred Stock Exchange speculations in company with Evans, and continued to increase his liabilities ever since. The prudent course would have been, on the occasion of his first liability, to go to his father and confess the whole thing. Isaac was quite wealthy enough to have arranged matters. Instead Disraeli said nothing, and the debt continued to grow like a snowball, with interest piled on interest. His habits of life only made matters worse. He never stopped to think if he could afford a thing: the only question he asked himself was: did he want it?

To a natural indolence he added a natural lavishness of outlook and love of display. He made money in hundreds by writing novels and spent it in thousands by borrowing from money-lenders. Having arrived among the very highest *ton*, he found himself mixing on terms of equality with men who from the hour of their birth had never needed even to think about money. The great landed families, whether Whigs or Tories, ruled England, and from the very nature of the electoral system, as we have seen, in order to succeed in politics wealth was essential. To take one example of wealth derived from land, Lord Blessington, the admirer and benefactor of Count D'Orsay, was reputed to have enjoyed an income of £30,000 a year. That D'Orsay let his share of it run through his fingers is evidenced by a sad letter to his "*cher* Dis" in difficulties, swearing before God that he had not sixpence at his bankers, having lost three hundred and twenty-five pounds two nights previously. In spite of that he offers to stand security, not a very happy proposal from Disraeli's creditors' point of view.

He had only one attitude towards money, that it was there to be spent, and as long as he did not go in actual fear of arrest for debt he seems to have remained perfectly happy. This happiness sometimes eluded him, though no man ever bore the burden of debt with a lighter heart. If Disraeli's had been a worrying nature he must have ended in a lunatic asylum, but a common feature of great men is that they refuse to worry. Faith in a star may relieve them from worry, but more probably their freedom is due to an iron digestive system without which no man can become great. The frequent references to food, anything from an *olio* to a swan, on Disraeli's part, suggest that he possessed the type of digestive system necessary for greatness.

No dyspeptic could endure so many thoughts concerning the fount and origin of all his miseries.

Still, the position of a debtor had its inconveniences. He cannot dine with Austen for fear of duns or writs, so Austen must dine with him. His affairs reached such a condition that solitude and hard work became essential. There entered now upon the scene one, William Pyne, a solicitor, who took over the thankless task of trying to straighten out Disraeli's money affairs, and succeeded so well that he talks about buying a half share in a weekly paper for five hundred pounds—weekly papers must have been cheaper to produce in 1836 than they are now—though he possessed little more than two hundred pounds at the time. Peel invites him to dine at the Carlton, and he asks Pyne anxiously if it is safe. The moment comes when Disraeli doubts if it is "safe" to remain at Bradenham, as proceedings against him for debt in a constituency which he had nursed with such care would be "confusion."

The amount of work his poverty-stricken state compelled him to accomplish was staggering. We read of his having completed five octavo volumes of one novel, and two of another, which he hopes to finish by the end of the year, the month being November. After that he expects to start a third novel, and so on.

Only a professional writer can understand the immense and exhausting industry necessary to produce fiction at this pace. No wonder Disraeli describes the quantity as "something monstrous." But very soon he talks of taking rooms in the Albany, not an inexpensive neighbourhood, and even of buying Chequers Court, which he imagines might cost forty thousand or fifty thousand pounds, but wishes to leave half the money on mortgage. This wish at least is understandable.

Chequers Court was not bought.

The early part of 1837 found him staying in London with his beloved D'Orsay. Lady Blessington now lived at Gore House, Kensington Gore, and D'Orsay had taken the house next door so as to be close to his old friend. The financial arrangements of these fine fellows appear completely mysterious to a generation compelled to live on a cash basis. We last heard of D'Orsay swearing he had not even sixpence at his banker's, and now he takes a house in Kensington Gore. Lady Blessington wrote also, for ten hours a day, and made two thousand a year, but much of it went on being good to her relations.

The delights of D'Orsay's *ménage* ceased owing to a bye-

election in Buckinghamshire, for Disraeli returned to Bradenham in order to help the Conservative candidate. At Aylesbury, owing to the strain of over-work and the exertion of making speeches he had a slight fit. They took him back to Bradenham and here, enfeebled by illness, he made at least a partial confession about his debts to Isaac, who came to the rescue, but also improved the occasion with wise saws. D'Orsay rejoiced over this step, and who can wonder, for a solvent friend greatly exceeds in charm one who is insolvent.

Somehow or another in the midst of all his troubles, financial and political, Disraeli finished *Venetia*, the novel dedicated to Lord Lyndhurst. It is inspired by Byron and Shelley, Bryon being dramatised as Cadurcis and Shelley as Marmion Herbert. It seems a little unfortunate to have christened the Shelley character with a name out of Sir Walter Scott's well-known what-ho-without-there, boot-and-saddle romance in verse, for Scott and Shelley could never really have enjoyed one another's society. Much local colour was derived from Tita, who had been Byron's servant and saw him die, that Tita who served Disraeli during the voyage of the *Susan* and now lived, a pensioner, at Bradenham. Venetia herself is a delightful study of girlhood. This novel, like *Henrietta Temple*, had no political background of any sort, but unlike *Henrietta Temple* it appealed more to the critical few than to the uninstructed many.

The hour was now almost at hand when Disraeli would realise his dream and enter Parliament. He left Bradenham for London in May, and plunged into the thick of social and political activities. He met many men of great importance and took a leading part in the election of Sir Francis Burdett, for Westminster. But bye-elections ceased to count very much because of far more important events close at hand.

King William IV was dying, "dying like an old lion," as Disraeli put it. He told his doctors on June 18th, 1837, the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo: "Only let me live through this glorious day." He did live through it, and died on the night of June the 19th.

That was the spirit in which the sailor king might have been expected to die. The third son of George III, he had entered the Royal Navy and taken part in the Battle of Cape St. Vincent under Sir John Jervis and Nelson (1780). He became heir to the throne on the death of the Duke of York in 1827, and succeeded George IV in 1830. During William IV's brief reign many historic events took place; the passing of the Reform

Bill (1832), the emancipation of slaves, the settlement of the East India Company, and the rise of the middle class, among others.

There succeeded him the youthful Queen Victoria at the age of eighteen, whose association with Disraeli in years to come was to be distinguished by such a gracious intimacy and warmth of friendship. At the moment of her succession his excitement became intense, because a new parliament must be elected and his place in it seemed assured.

Actually he received invitations to stand for Ashburton, Derby, Chicester, Dartmouth, Marylebone, and Taunton. Fate, however, stepped in, and who shall say that Fate did not take on the appearance of Mary Anne?

He was in close touch with the young Queen's accession. He went to Kensington Palace when peers, Privy Councillors, and so forth did homage to Victoria. Lyndhurst witnessed the scene with emotion. They kissed the young Queen's hand, which they agreed was remarkably sweet and soft. After all, why not, for she was only eighteen? And then began a political dog-fight, since the death of the King necessitated a new parliament.

There were all sorts of *brouhaha* and *tra-la-la*, but eventually Disraeli could inform Sarah, still in the peace of Bradenham, that, for all Ashburton, Derby, Chicester, Dartmouth, etc., his prospects seemed bright, because he started for the borough of Maidstone with Wyndham Lewis.

Therein at last Mary Anne was justified of her opinion. Lyndhurst may have been Lyndhurst, and Chandos Chandos, but undoubtedly Disraeli owed his choice for the second Tory seat at Maidstone to Mary Anne. The Conservatives of Maidstone meant first to run only Wyndham Lewis, but realising later their strength they sent to the Carlton Club for another candidate. That candidate was Disraeli, and if Mary Anne did not engineer his choice, then the earth is flat, and raspberries grow on gooseberry bushes.

At Maidstone he repeated his political creed which has been set out earlier, namely king, church, and Parliament. He also threw his handkerchief to the farmer, a wise inspiration, since agriculture was, and still is, the greatest industry in the country.

> "Resident," said he in his address to the Maidstone electors, "in an agricultural county, and deeply interested in the land, I will on all occasions watch with vigilant solicitude over the fortunes of the British farmer, because I sincerely

Alfred Count D'Orsay, the famous Parisian dandy who exerted an immense influence in fashionable London; the great friend of Lady Blessington and Disraeli.

believe that his welfare is the surest and most permanent basis of general prosperity."

No doubt the local British farmer took it all for gospel, ignoring the fact that an ambitious young politician would say anything under the sun for vote-catching purposes. No doubt the beer was good, and anyhow an election to-day is no less hypocritical than an election in 1837, let alterations in the electoral system be what they may.

Lastly he attacked the Poor Law of 1834. "It went on the principle that relief to the poor is a *charity*. I maintain that it is a *right!*" It seems remarkable to discover Disraeli preaching this doctrine in 1837, when it has not been accepted universally to-day. It rounded out the most attractive political programme that can ever have been conceived: King, Church, Parliament, solicitude for the fortunes of the British farmer, and poor relief as a right, not a charity.

Wyndham Lewis wrote about this speech to Mary Anne in glowing terms. We can picture her sitting up in bed, for, surely, like all attractive women, she breakfasted in bed when alone, reading the letter with a smile, her ringlets in charming disarray, her tip-tilted nose slightly more provocative than usual.

"What did I always say?" she would inquire of space. "Who is less surprised than I am?"

How narrow is the margin between triumph and catastrophe! At that very moment the devoted William Pyne was doing his utmost to prevent writs being served on Disraeli at Maidstone. Disraeli wrote to him that he was glad to find the Sheriff's officer there among his staunch supporters, adding the comment: "I suppose gratitude."

At first he had no opponent, but later Colonel Perronet Thompson, a Radical, took up the challenge. In spite of the Colonel, Disraeli in the end could send Sarah triumphantly these figures:

Lewis	707
Disraeli	616
Thompson	412

and realise with a sigh of relief that debts and vicissitudes notwithstanding he was now in Parliament.

Mary Anne felt, of course, delighted, though she had never allowed herself any doubts of success, because she was not the woman to plan and then strike at the wrong moment. There

and then she permitted herself one of the most remarkable prophecies ever made, though a charming woman is seldom wrong in her estimate of a man in whose career she is interested.

"Mark my words—mark what I say," wrote Mary Anne to her brother, Major Viney Evans. "Mr Disraeli will in a very few years be one of the greatest men of his day. His great talents . . . with Wyndham's power to keep him in Parliament, will ensure his success." She ended with delightful complacence that they called him her parliamentary protégé.

This he was most certainly, and the irony of circumstances compelled him to owe success to the pretty little flirt and rattle of Rosina Bulwer's soirée in April, 1832. Mary Anne had discovered her new interest in life, so essential to a lady in the early forties who has been married for twenty-two years. Some women of her age indulged in more or less unsatisfactory flirtations, but she had made a far better choice by taking under her wing the political sensation of the future. Mary Anne believed profoundly that Disraeli would indeed prove a political sensation and events justified her belief. Henceforward she would see history in the making, enjoy the confidence of a brilliant young politician, and share the secrets of his campaigns. Caroline Norton could have her Lord Melbourne and welcome. A greater than Melbourne prepared to take the field, and politically speaking he belonged to Mary Anne.

She must have smiled when she wrote those words to her brother about Wyndham's power to keep Disraeli in Parliament. True, the hand was the hand of Wyndham, but the choice was the choice of Mary Anne. She had plotted quietly but relentlessly for three whole years, watching her brilliant discovery, whom she had assured that she liked silent melancholy men, make his mistakes, and tread his primrose pathway through the drawing-rooms, disappear from Mayfair in order to dodge his creditors, and produce novels in feverish haste to satisfy them, sow his political wild oats, and come at last into the party fold where, long ago, Wyndham preceded him.

It is doubtful if she even grudged Disraeli his love-affair with Henrietta. That sort of thing went with his temperament and was inevitable. Now he had survived it and henceforward ambition alone possessed him. It would be great fun, Mary Anne reflected, twisting the rings on her slender fingers, to be the power behind Disraeli, not the inspiration perhaps, but the means of success. A woman could never in her own person become a Grey or a Melbourne, a Peel or a Stanley, but she could

do it at second hand if she discovered and encouraged one whom destiny had chosen to be greater than them all.

She read Wyndham's letter again, and dwelt on that phrase about Disraeli's being a splendid orator. A good sort, Wyndham, very kind, very sound, and almost as enthusiastic as herself. No doubt he believed he was seconding her protégé to further the progress of the Party, but he wasn't. He did it because Mary Anne wanted him to on account of a young man she had seen from her window driving in the Park, with much the same emotions as those of the wise men when they saw a star in the east, and determined to follow his career even as they followed the star. And it had all come about through that rather fatuous woman Rosina with her dogs and her affectations and her quarrels with her husband.

From Bradenham the triumphant protégé shared with Mary Anne in the most charming fashion his glory. On the way down from London he had seen in his own county of Buckinghamshire his colour adorning every town, and placards with Lewis and Disraeli. It was curious, he thought, to see their united names in his native surroundings. Coming events had indeed cast their shadows before them. At Wycombe it was market day, and on the receipt of the news that he had been elected they rang the bells and got up a subscription in the market to illuminate the town. This must have pleased him with his passion for lights. The band paraded in his honour till after midnight, and good Buckinghamshire beer ran freely in celebration of his health. At Aylesbury Lord Chandos himself announced the result and the crowd cheered again and yet again.

And then, oh, crowning touch, the statement that they all longed for her and Mr. Wyndham—a pretty touch of deference, that "Mr." from the younger to the older man—to visit them at Bradenham, if simplicity and affection were enough to tempt them. The signature was simply: "Dis."

A week later she asked him to dine at Grosvenor Gate, and gave a wonderful dinner, wonderfully served: the Clarendons, Lady Lloyd, Prince and Princess Poniatowski, and others present. He perceived that the Wyndham Lewises grew more and more friendly to him, and why not? Mary Anne had laid her plans, brought them to the point of success, and now she proposed to enjoy the prestige of her political discovery, to exhibit her young lion to the fashionable gaze as, in particular, *her* young lion. From now onward she held him in leash; he was linked to her by ties not only of friendship, but of personal advantage.

For what would be the situation when Parliament met? The Whigs were in power, but not strong. Allegiance of leaders to parties was less firm than at the present day and opportunism was rampant. Anything might happen in the near future, with a youthful queen on the throne, inexperienced in public affairs, faced with political giants in both the great parties. Mary Anne's protégé would find limitless opportunities for advancement, and the more attractive they proved the more important to him that safe seat at Maidstone.

Disraeli himself recognised the hand of Fate. He dwelt once on the oddness of his sitting for Maidstone and accepted the fact with Oriental fatalism. The future lay in the lap of the gods; he awaited events and refused to try to read the riddle of destiny.

Before the political future began to unfold itself Mary Anne and her husband paid the much desired visit to Bradenham, and the charm of the house, and the grassy rides, and the beech-woods of Buckinghamshire laid its spell upon her. There she found quite another Dis from the Mayfair dandy with his chains and his elaborate waistcoats, his fantastic colour schemes and rings worn outside white kid gloves. He appeared instead as the affectionate son of a simple and charming family, happy with his horses and dogs, a country justice of the peace given to country pursuits.

She met all the figures of whom she had heard so much: Maria, the quiet, self-effacing wife and mother, Isaac, the gentle old scholar with failing eyesight and the half-pathetic kindness of his race, Jem and Ralph, the younger brothers, and Sarah the beloved sister, her eyes dark with the tragedy of her dead lover; Tita, the link with Shelley and Byron, who had stabbed several men in his time, Latin and long-moustached.

Surely during those days in the woods and on the terraces of Bradenham some psychic foreknowledge of what would befall must have come to her.

For him the spell began already to operate. Passion had spent itself on Henrietta and his parting from her marked the end of an epoch. Henceforward ambition was to rule him exclusively, but the sombre melancholy of his nature persisted, and always he would find himself subject to periods of gloom and despair. In these moments Mary Anne understood him perfectly. Then, indeed, she saw before her the silent melancholy type she professed to admire. She became at those times exactly what he had called her, a pretty little woman, a flirt and a rattle.

The flirting was infinitely decorous, but she would make him laugh and chase away the furies of depression. She had all the softness and charm of a West-country girl, and she admired him. More important still, during those black fits of his she could persuade him that he was admirable.

There lies the secret of Mary Anne's long and happy marriage to Disraeli and his eternal gratitude to her. Intellectually she was not remarkable, but as a psychologist, so far as Disraeli was concerned, she has been equalled seldom and never surpassed. Neither does she appear as a mere feather-bed wife after she married him, blindly admiring in an indiscriminate fashion. She soothed him in his moments of misery, but she spurred him forward in his moments of ambition. As witness there is the vow of hers never to hear him speak in the Commons until he had become Prime Minister. In the case of a man as vain as Disraeli that vow alone constituted a master-stroke of psychology. He understood much of his need of her and her power to satisfy it after that first visit of her and " Mr. Wyndham" to Bradenham. When she had gone away the glory seemed to him to have departed from the manorial house with the high device on its great iron gates. Everything appeared stale and monotonous and nothing happened; even the beautiful weather only made him feel more lonely for her. He told her, in case the news might please her, that everyone at Bradenham loved her, including himself.

May Anne went home completely charmed by her visit and her hosts. She described to her brother every detail of the stay at Bradenham, of the great rooms, and the servants, the horses, the dogs, and the library. Old Isaac Disraeli won her heart completely; she called him lovable and perfect, but the affection was not all on her side. That visit initiated a friendship between them which lasted until Isaac's death, and in his old age, when his sight had failed, it was Mary Anne who cheered him with light-hearted, peculiarly Mary-Anne-ish letters, giving him all the gossip of London and the latest news about his wonderful son. Disraeli had now proceeded beyond the status of political protégé. Mary Anne wrote of him to Major Evans as their political pet, adding that he was commonly called Dizzy.

The political pet occupied the interval before the meeting of Parliament with country house visits. He found himself among shooting dandies for the most part, including the celebrated Whyte Melville. Breakfast went on all day long, the host merely hoping that his guests would have breakfasted before he dined.

From the midst of these venatorial delights in which he took no part, to the joy of the ladies bored, as always, with shooting parties which deprived them all day of male society, he wrote at length to Mary Anne, but the tenderness of his mood at Bradenham after she left was absent, and he confined himself almost solely to politics. Apparently Melbourne had already gained his ascendancy over the little Queen, for they were having their portraits painted at the same time by the same artist.

Disraeli spent the remainder of the lull before Parliament met in reading political history at Bradenham. His health had improved, and the only cloud on the horizon was the eternal difficulty about his debts.

III

THE POLITICAL PET

OF all the Parliaments that engaged Mary Anne's interest none was so exciting as that which met on November 15th, 1857. Historically its interest lies in the fact that it was the first Parliament of Queen Victoria's reign; to Mary Anne interest lay in the fact that in it Disraeli took his seat for the first time. In his political career, unbroken for almost forty years, she was to experience many more thrills, but first things have a wistful charm which greater triumphs in a more glorious future cannot equal.

Lord Melbourne was Whig Prime Minister in the House of Lords, with Lord John Russell, Home Secretary, leading the House of Commons, and Lord Palmerston, Foreign Secretary. Sir Robert Peel led the Opposition. No more notable and instructive models could have appeared before the eyes of a young member making his parliamentary début.

He arrived at the House with Wyndham Lewis and took his seat on the second bench behind Sir Robert Peel. Though excited by the novelty of the proceedings he does not seem to have been overwhelmed, for he described the Speaker as looking like an old laundress. Probably he felt greatly encouraged by the attitude of Peel, who shook hands with him and invited him to a dinner at the Carlton on the following Thursday.

On the twentieth he was summoned to the Lords with the rest of the faithful Commons to hear the little Queen read her speech. She wore a diamond tiara, and aroused his admiration. There was a division on the Address, he missed his dinner, being kept at the House till ten o'clock, and had supper at the Carlton: oysters, Guinness, and broiled bones.

Mary Anne, eagerly anticipating his maiden speech, was obliged to wait patiently for over a fortnight, but the sensation it provoked justified the delay. The speech took place on a somewhat acrimonious debate in which O'Connell spoke. Disraeli followed him. The memory of O'Connell's speech

putting forward a suggestion received from the invaluable Colburn, his publisher. Again Peel cheered, and there was much congratulation. To crown all, Maidstone gave Disraeli a banquet and Wyndham Lewis overwhelmed him with kindness.

The prophetic Mary Anne now had definite reasons to feel confident in the future of her pet. It seems likely that he suffered some reaction from the excitement of his maiden speech, and the success of the speech on the Copyright Bill, and that she felt obliged to chide him for sinking into depression. At any rate he complained during the Christmas recess at Bradenham that everything was depressing, and everyone seemed as dull and flat as she thought him.

She thought him nothing of the kind, but she knew to a nicety when to feed him with sugar and when he needed a touch of the spurs.

That happened after a second visit of hers to Bradenham. Some mysterious foreknowledge of the future made her remote and enigmatic. He might take a more significant place in her life than that of a political pet if events fell out in a certain manner, because Wyndham Lewis' health was failing. Though only fifty-eight he had become already something of an invalid, and if he were to die, what then?

Mary Anne, looking in the glass, gave herself that ruthless scrutiny in which a woman only indulges when she is alone. According to the calendar she must call herself forty-six, but even to her own candid eyes she looked little more than thirty-six. She came of robust ancestors, the Evanses on the one hand and the Vineys on the other, service families and farmers. The adventurous spirit of John Evans vitalised her and the West Country had given her radiant health. Besides, she had always lived care-free and perfectly happy; the lines traced by sorrow and anxiety were absent from her face.

A smile trembled about her mouth, and when Mary Anne smiled she looked adorable. One would regret Wyndham if anything happened to him, but no one could influence destiny, and destiny had led her to make the acquaintance of the dazzling young Disraeli. Mary Anne's expression grew thoughtful; must one after all call him so very young? According to the calendar he was thirty-four, but he belonged to a type that is born old, and she to one that remains perenially young. Mentally she was years younger than he, and physically not a great deal older. Those mysterious illnesses, the vicissitudes of travel, the claims of society, exacting literary work, the stress

of politics, and the anxiety due to his debts had all taken their toll. A man could not play the part of social, literary, and political adventurer without acquiring scars in the process. Taking everything into consideration not a great deal separated them in the way of age.

Looking back on the visit to Bradenham, had she perhaps been a little remote, unkind, even harsh? He did not even get down in time to see her off when she left. His excuse was that he worked late and slept badly, but that scarcely deceived a woman of her intelligence and intuition. Perhaps his feelings were really hurt, and still he missed her. Mary Anne smiled a second time. There is no more delightful pastime for a woman than healing wounded feelings, and whose touch could be gentler than hers when she wished?

Thus when he returned to London for the new session of the House he found Mary Anne very kind, and perhaps a thought wistful. After all he had let her leave Bradenham without even coming down to say good-bye. At the end of the month she let him accompany her to the theatre with Mr. and Mrs. Horace Twiss to see Kean act. It was a charming, intimate little theatre party, undertaken in great comfort because Lord Chesterfield had lent them his box. Kean was mediocre, but they had a fire —the winter was freezingly cold—and their own tea. Wyndham's absence may have been regrettable, but he was ailing and remained at home. Parliamentary duties kept him in London, but perhaps he foresaw that he would not live a great while longer, for the Celts are psychic, and longed secretly and hopelessly for Pantgwynlais Castle and his Welsh hills that he might never see again. Grosvenor Place, a view over the Park, and the *clip-clop* of hoofs from passing horses made a poor substitute for the illimitable Cambrian distances, the blur of mountains on the skyline and the soft Welsh speech.

Mary Anne was kind, and Disraeli flung himself wholeheartedly into the political mêlée. Henceforward politics were to be the main preoccupation of his life; they would never prevent him from offering Mary Anne all the charming solicitude which was to bind her to him for ever in unselfish love, but she would sit at home to welcome the warrior on his return from battle and share the feasting and triumph. Nothing could be more remarkable than Disraeli's tireless interest in every detail of the House of Commons. His letters to Sarah have the technical insight of Cæsar's commentaries, though not the style. Nothing is too trivial to be noticed and considered. Outside the House he went

everywhere and saw everyone: to a concert at the opening of the season where, curious to discover, the Duke appeared wearing the Garter and the Golden Fleece, most unconcert-like decorations, together with the Lansdownes, Salisburys, the Duke of Beaufort, and last but not least, Mary Anne. There was a dinner with the Powerscourts and an evening with the Salisburys. Lady Londonderry was the means of his meeting the Salisburys. Her interest in him did not cease with her speaking of him to Lady Salisbury. She offered him more kindness shortly afterwards.

These names indeed made news.

Then, on March 14th, 1838, that occurred which proved the most fateful happening in Disraeli's career. Wyndham Lewis died at his London home.

He was only fifty-eight, entitled at that age, as a man of wealth and influence, to anticipate a long and fruitful life, but fate intervened and he had looked his last on the Welsh hills. His portrait is a little dim, but he appears to generations that succeeded him as a generous, kindly man, an affectionate husband and a good friend. For all his political associations and his local importance in his native Wales he only has a place in history because he married Mary Anne and gave Disraeli the opportunity to become a member of Parliament. His epitaph consists in those words of Mary Anne when she declared that she had been happy with both her husbands, and the most admirable tribute to a husband is a confession of happiness on the part of his wife.

Wyndham Lewis died as he had lived, generous and affectionate, leaving Mary Anne a fortune and the house in Grosvenor Gate, without any clause in his will penalising her in the event of a second marriage.

Disraeli broke the sad news to Sarah, who knew and loved Mary Anne. She had remained with her husband when he died. Disraeli called on her and was struck by her grief, but his attitude towards her still remained merely that of a friend, his career absorbed him, and the day after the death of his fellow-member for Maidstone he made a brilliant speech on a motion against the Corn Laws. Wyndham Lewis had passed but life marched on, the opportunity for the speech offered itself and the essence of generalship, military or political, is to seize an opportunity and exploit it. Lord John Russell, a great man, niggardly of praise, sitting on the opposite side of the House, told a friend the speech was the best thing he had heard for a long time.

They would gain first-hand news of the triumph at Bradenham because Jem had come up from Buckinghamshire to see his wonderful big brother in the house and watch the mysterious functioning of the Mother of Parliaments. Disraeli introduced Jem into the House, but lost sight of him after the speech. In the flush of victory one could hardly trouble about one's young brother. Chandos, noticing Jem, remarked to Disraeli on the family likeness. Jem went home to Bradenham, and the wonderfulness of the big brother lost nothing in the telling. Jem described to them with bated breath how Castlereagh had rushed into the House before Disraeli's speech asking: "Is Disraeli up yet?" Sarah, the faithful sister, wrote paraphrasing the *Nunc dimittis*, that now four hundred members had heard him she didn't seem to mind what happened, and sent her dearest brother her blessing. Well was she named Sarah, for Sarah means a Princess, and Sarah Disraeli had indeed a royal quality of giving where her eldest brother was in question.

Looking back nearly a hundred years and seeing the happenings of 1838 in a clear perspective we seem to detect a definite change in Disraeli's attitude towards Mary Anne after the death of Wyndham Lewis.

When first he met her he affected to despise her, and there is nothing strange in this because many a man has despised at their first meeting the woman with whom subsequently he fell passionately in love. Indeed, lucky the woman a man despises at the outset if she wishes to captivate him, because by despising her he makes her task so easy. He preserves no secret of his character; he makes of it an open book for her to read so that she can detect the weak points and concentrate on them. That Mary Anne summed up Disraeli at Rosina Bulwer's on that first occasion is obvious from her remark that she liked silent, melancholy men. This to the social lion, the brilliant conversationalist, the fashionable author, sounded very like impertinence. How dared she tell him, with a solemn expression in her beautiful eyes and a smile playing round her mouth, that she preferred a type the antithesis of his own? He left her in a fit of pique, which was exactly what she wanted him to do. He disliked her, but he remembered, a very promising state of affairs from Mary Anne's point of view.

Gradually the ill-temper passed and he began to like and respect her. She gave wonderful dinner-parties, she was kind, amusing, and understanding, she sympathised with his ambitions and stood ready to further them. More, she enlisted the

interest of her husband, a man of wealth and influence. Disraeli found he could talk to her, turn to her in those black fits of melancholy and weariness which overwhelmed him periodically, when Parliament seemed unattainable, success a dream, and his debts a crushing burden not to be borne.

Mary Anne, who lacked a single care in the world and had never known one, who only wanted to be amused and interested, saw with the detached vision of the fortunate considering the affairs of someone less fortunate, the real obstacle in his path. Allowing for all his airs and affectations she recognised him for a political genius if only he could enjoy the opportunity provided by a seat in Parliament. Through her husband she gave him that opportunity, never doubting the result for one moment.

It is very difficult to form a just appreciation of Disraeli's character. He had so many glorious qualities: courage, unique political judgment, a matchless gift of words, a capacity to win the confidence of men divided from him by seemingly unbridgeable gulfs of thought and upbringing; and at the same time a perfectly villainous pretentiousness and gimcrack ostentation, such as caused the young officers of the Malta garrison to describe him as that damned bumptious Jew boy.

What turns the scale definitely in his favour is a gift of unswerving gratitude, a dog-like faithfulness to anyone who had ever been good to him, and his unthinking generosity. He meant every syllable of every word when he declared that he would have given his life for Meredith's in Cairo to spare Sarah her lifelong mourning for her dead lover. His affection for Sarah, for his father, and later for Mary Anne, never faltered. He never forgot a friend; even Tita, on the death of Isaac, was found a place as messenger in a Government office.

So long as breath remained in Disraeli's body he would remember in Mary Anne the woman who gave him his chance to become famous, but to gratitude during her visits to Bradenham, first with Wyndham Lewis and then alone, had been added something more. There is, as everyone knows who possesses any sensibility, a genius of places, and Buckinghamshire exerted a profound influence on Disraeli. He encountered it first when the family took Ward's house near Amersham for the holidays; it increased during the long tenure by Isaac of Bradenham, and it culminated in the closing years of Disraeli's life with Mary Anne, when she became the lady of Hughenden, also in Buckinghamshire, and designed those walks through the woods which recalled the Germany of her honeymoon travels.

It was when he saw her in the surroundings of Bradenham that the good friend, the charming hostess, the amusing companion became the woman he could bring himself to love. It is certain that Mary Anne knew this quite well, and that when he remained in his room and let her return to London without the courtesy of a formal farewell she smiled privately as she stepped into her travelling carriage. It may well have been that her eyes met Sarah's in a glance of mutual understanding. A man who remained indifferent toward her would have behaved punctiliously at any cost of boredom. Either her dear Dis felt too wretched to face her or he hid in his room for strategic reasons. His conduct convinced her that she meant more to him than mere friendship.

By that time it seems likely that she knew she would marry him if Wyndham Lewis died. She did not want Wyndham to die, yet the psychological link between her and Disraeli had been forged. He could not recognise it as clearly as she, but an increasing restlessness warned him that he no longer thought of her purely as a friend. One does not tell a mere friend, even a woman friend, that the world is flat, stale, and unprofitable because she has left Buckinghamshire for London.

For the first time in his life the idea of marriage entered definitely into his plans. He had told Sarah, when trying to console her for the death of Meredith, that he had neither wife nor betrothed and had never sought them. He had said contemptuously that he would never marry for love because all his friends who married for love either beat their wives or separated from them. Since then had occurred the passionate episode of Henrietta. If any woman in the wide world could have made him a slave to love she was Henrietta, but Henrietta failed, as every woman must fail. He acknowledged only one mistress, namely, ambition. Any woman who shared his life would as a matter of course subordinate herself to his career. Henrietta came of a type which subordinates itself to nothing and no one, hence her epitaph: "Parted for ever from Henrietta."

Passion lay behind him and fame beckoned, but even the famous needed the background of a home and the solicitude of some delightful woman, content to bask in reflected glory, who would take upon herself the responsibility of housekeeping and entertaining, and meet her husband with a smile when he returned weary from the clash of factions in the House.

What woman could play such a part better than Mary Anne? She had played it already to admiration for Wyndham Lewis.

Disraeli, with the run of many great houses in London could recall none with more charming amenities than those of No. 1 Grosvenor Gate. There Mary Anne gave perfect dinners perfectly cooked and served to a concourse of fashionable guests. No one canvassed more successfully than she and electors worshipped her. She was familiar with the political world and possessed a flair for politics. She was delightful, amusing, a marvellous housekeeper, and disposed of her own fortune.

There is no good ground for concluding that in the end Disraeli married her purely for her money. Wyndham Lewis left her between four and five thousand a year and the house in Grosvenor Gate, and she inherited more from her mother, but even in those days four or five thousand a year did not represent a large fortune. By the date of his marriage Disraeli had arrived politically; the Lyndhursts, the Chandoses, and the Lord John Russells, not to mention Peel, recognised him for a coming man. Years previously he had asked Sarah what she thought of a certain lady who possessed £25,000 as a possible wife for him; given his success in the House and his powerful friends he might quite well have chosen a wealthy bride without much difficulty.

Since he desired not a marriage of passion, but one of affection, no temperamental beauty would suit his purpose, no Henrietta, or Caroline Norton, or Lady Seymour. Bulwer's marriage offered a grim example of marriage for love and beauty. After repeated quarrels Bulwer had departed with his wife to Italy in order to build up again the fabric of marriage, but once there settled down to write a book, leaving Rosina to her own devices. There followed some sort of contretemps between Rosina and an Italian prince and the Bulwers separated.

Mary Anne's essential appeal to Disraeli is expressed in a remark made by Clay at Cairo. By the time they reached Cairo, Clay, who chartered the *Susan* for their Mediterranean voyage, knew Disraeli very well. Clay became ill and proposed to leave Cairo and return home, a fact which grieved Disraeli, because he hated to be troubled with "those little affairs of which life greatly consists," and Clay excelled in organisation. Consequently, Clay remarked to Meredith that Disraeli ought never to travel without a nurse.

If he were to take Mary Anne for his bride he need never again travel through life without a nurse because, to an even greater extent than Clay, she knew how to manage the little affairs of which life greatly consisted. Neither would she long

to steal the applause from him or monopolise the limelight, being content to sit at his feet and admire him after having made every conceivable arrangement for his comfort. This last attribute recommended her also because, like all great men, Disraeli could never have tolerated in the home a rival who wished to compete with him for the interest of the world at large. Mary Anne, a West-country girl, cherished no such foolish ideas. She knew and had always known that men were her fortune, that her aim must be to shine in the reflected glory of a man, not seek glory on her own account. This seemed to her only logical; it was infinitely more simple to make a man love one and want to give to one than to struggle for fame on one's own account. She found women celebrated for their intellectual achievements the most dreadful bore, and they had acquired, most justly, the nickname of bluestockings.

Thus inevitably after the death of Wyndham Lewis the paths of Mary Anne and Disraeli converged. Each had something to offer which the other desired greatly. Apart from his solitary passion for Henrietta he longed always to be consoled and mothered by a woman older than himself; Mary Anne wished for nothing better than to mother and console this wayward genius younger than herself, who would reach the topmost pinnacle of fame if only he could be spared the petty anxieties of life and be left free to concentrate on his career.

Disraeli's attitude towards her in her widowhood marks a stage in his life when he forsook extremes of conduct and concentrated on the House of Commons. Brilliant hostesses contended for him and she was not brilliant, only affectionate, amusing, practical, and a judge of men, but he began to weary of brilliant hostesses. Among their company one must always glitter in conversation and appearance, and nowadays he was a lapidary of polished phrases for the House rather than for Mayfair drawing-rooms. He had evolved a formula that would ensure political success: attend the House faithfully during the session, and during the recess read Hansard. These were exacting occupations and a man only disposed of so much energy. In the company of Mary Anne one was not expected to shine. She could keep up a flow of delightful nonsense if one was tired, and comment shrewdly, in the light of past experience, on men and matters in the political arena.

Thus his attitude towards her began to assume a greater intimacy. Lamenting his departure for Maidstone he spoke of the town as that Maidstone where we have been so happy, and

Lord George Bentinck, second son of the Duke of Portland, who, in association with Disraeli, opposed Sir R. Peel's projected repeal of the Corn Laws. Lord George was a great figure in the

regretted that absence from London, where she remained, would mean no letters for a day or so. He hoped on his return to find her more recovered from the grief and strain of Wyndham Lewis' death. He ended a letter with the words "God bless you, dear friend" and signed it simply: "D."

To Mary Anne, weary from reaction, the letter abounded in those unmistakable signs which tell a woman so much. He did not wish to leave her; Maidstone meant to him chiefly a place where they had been happy together; he would have liked to write more often than circumstances permitted, and he longed for her to be well and happy.

She could not avoid the conclusion that on analysis it showed all the attributes of a love letter. That of course suggested a great many possibilities, but at the moment they could not materialise on account of her so recent widowhood. Meanwhile gloom hung over the house in Grosvenor Gate. One might neither entertain nor be entertained to any extent, and exterior mourning did not accord very well with her temperament. With Wyndham gone the mainspring of life seemed to have run down, for much of the household's routine had centred on his affairs.

Those tiny signs which indicate that friendship has merged into affection continued to increase. She became more and more his confidante in matters which touched him closely. There was, for instance, the increasing frailness of Isaac about which Disraeli worried so much. In all seriousness he wondered if he could possibly survive his father's death supposing it were to occur. He sent her little scraps of local news from Bradenham, quite sure that they would interest her; snow was falling in the middle of April; Jem had cut a new path through the woods.

Looking at the spectacle of life, a sad, small figure in her widow's weeds, she could see her almost-lover on his return to London basking once more in an instalment of the fame which, according to her prophecy, so surely awaited him. He made another brilliant speech on the Copyright Bill which won him distinction without saving that excellent measure from an untimely grave. After that personal affairs took her away from London; there was the business of Wyndham's will to be settled.

He had left her a life-interest in his estate and made her joint executor of his will with his brother, the Reverend William Price Lewis, and this was a further tribute to Mary Anne's excellent common sense from one of the two men who knew her best.

Wyndham Lewis, a man of property, would never have named her joint executor if she had been a frivolous little feather-head. Therefore, much against her inclination, for she had always disliked the Welsh, Mary Anne journeyed to meet the Reverend William Price Lewis.

Wyndham Lewis' estate, apart from the house in Grosvenor Gate, did not comprise solely Welsh property; there was more in Gloucestershire which belonged to Mary Anne's mother's family, for Sir James Viney, in some emergency, had mortgaged Taynton Manor to his niece's husband. It was this mortgage which she foreclosed after her second marriage. Sir James bore her no grudge on this account, for when he died in 1841, he left her a thousand pounds.

The visit to her in-laws depressed Mary Anne very much, and she confessed to Disraeli her annoyance at the pin-pricks and petty annoyances with which she had to contend. This called forth from him a reply far more lover-like than any of his previous letters.

It is always highly significant when a man writes to a woman for whom he has a great regard giving her good advice, taking her quarrels on his shoulders, disliking the people she dislikes, and sympathising with her to the exact degree and in the exact manner she herself would have chosen.

Never having seen the historic country of Wales or visited the Lewises in their native land, he yet expresses the fear that Mary Anne finds herself in "a miserable circle of narrow-minded people incapable of any generous emotion and any genial sympathy." This seems a little hard on Wales and the Welsh, but he was as nearly in love as makes no difference, and because Wyndham Lewis' relations dared to annoy Mary Anne, Disraeli would cheerfully have put them to the sword.

Having settled the Lewises once and for all he went on to tell her all the things she would have loved most to hear. It is no accusation of insincerity to note that he had a positive genius for saying exactly the right thing to any woman, as his correspondence with Queen Victoria alone proves abundantly. To the bereaved, solitary, and very annoyed Mary Anne it must have seemed like heaven to be told authoritatively that she must not indulge in grief or brood over the past, that she was far too young not to anticipate a second blooming, that her mother and brother loved her and that the Disraeli family *en masse* loved her too.

He himself was her faithful friend and though he lamented

her sorrows, at least they had enabled her to display a courage and sweetness of temper altogether admirable.

Then, since a lover longs for his beloved to feel interested in his affairs, just as he feels interested in hers, he could not forbear to tell her how all the papers praised his speech, and how a great friend of Mary Anne's stopped her carriage in order to congratulate him.

As she read all this surely a hitherto unwonted sweetness pervaded the bleak atmosphere that surrounded Mary Anne. He reproduced almost Ruth's attitude to Naomi: "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried."

Lastly he longed for her return, though she was not to hurry in case a too brief stay might necessitate another visit to an odious county—the adjective is Disraeli's—and its odious inhabitants. Once more he ended with God bless you and remained her affectionate friend.

Was it not worth even a journey to an odious country there to be embroiled in arguments with in-laws merely to receive so charming a letter? For the time she could read and re-read it and bask in the sense of well-being it conferred on her. There must be no definite approach to a widow of a few months; meanwhile he remembered her, missed her, and took leave of her with the most exquisite feeling.

He might have behaved so very differently. For all her personal interest in him, his advantages had been derived from Wyndham. Now, on Wyndham's death, he could anticipate nothing further; memory for gratitude is short and a graceful tribute of sympathy would have enabled him to pass out of her life, leaving it still more empty. She began to realise that wherever fate led him he would never forget those who had befriended him during his early struggles and disappointments.

There came from him still the kind of news she would like to hear. The weather in London was warm and the trees were in leaf. He dined with the Londonderrys, and Lady Hardwicke sang adorably. The Londonderrys are worth remembering because they figure in his life shortly afterwards. The Conservative Members of Parliament were giving a great entertainment for Sir Robert Peel. Seventy ladies could witness it, and Lady Peel refused to pick the seventy ladies, so a ballot would decide the fate of the seventy ladies. If he could, said

Disraeli, he would offer his ticket to Mary Anne, but Mary Anne lingered afar off.

Lord Chandos was giving a dinner to Wellington, Lyndhurst, the Londonderrys, the Peels, and many more of similar standing. Disraeli had received an invitation; she might feel surprised, but the exciting fact remained.

He told her all this with a lover's pride. Every woman longs for the man who admires her to recognise his importance in the scheme of things. He wished her to understand that if she loved him she was not in love with some obscure creature of whom nothing more need be heard. The Chandoses, the Peels, and the Londonderrys esteemed him. She might rely on him to retain a position in the great world, social as well as political.

Beyond that he considered himself happy if she was happy also. There was no more to be said.

If Mary Anne enjoyed that insight into the male mind which is the privilege of the average woman she could not have felt otherwise than flattered by this insidious verbal wooing which Disraeli carried on. It is doubtful if, at that time, she could have met the Duke of Wellington, the Chandoses, the Londonderrys, and the Peels on their own ground. True, indisposition prevented Wellington from attending Chandos' party, but only an act of God denied the company his presence. The lovely Lady Anna Grenville, Chandos' daughter, graced the proceedings. Was she altogether outside Disraeli's orbit? Perhaps, and perhaps not. She became Lady Anna Gore-Langton, but she might have become Lady Beaconsfield.

Mary Anne, remote in her widowhood, took heed and said little or nothing. Hers had become a very difficult part to play. One needed to avoid being swamped by the second-hand brilliance of his social activities and show oneself the retiring widow, cut off from all worldly affairs, serene and self-sufficient. If he wanted her he must convince her of an overwhelming desire. Given the difference in their ages, her experience of life compared with his, it was absurd to expect that she should throw herself into his arms. Consider, for instance, their respective records. She had already made one man happy, a man of wealth and influence who could have married any one of a dozen girls merely by lifting a little finger, but he had chosen Mary Anne, the perfect darling, after having seen her for the first time at General Vernon-Graham's ball.

Could Disraeli invoke a comparable record? What woman

had he ever made happy? Only, perhaps, Sarah, a lonely figure at Bradenham, for whom love had passed so that she found the whole of her life bound up in that of her brother, asking no more than to admire him as he loved to be admired.

It was the situation of the trained soldier compared to the recruit. Her dear Dis might ruffle it with the best and be sought out by the most desired hostesses, but they sought him purely for a passing brilliance, a spectacular performance verbally and sartorially, the hinted reputation of a coming man, nothing sincere or of permanent value.

Mary Anne, who had been married for twenty-three years, realised far better than Disraeli the appeal of permanent values. After all, that had been the appeal of Wyndham Lewis; odd in some ways, the strangest man Disraeli ever met, but kind, sound, and dependable. Wyndham Lewis possessed the virtues of the desirable husband, so rare and little understood. What, Mary Anne asked herself, has the desirable husband in common with the attractive lover? In the final analysis very little. The attractive lover exhibits himself in the realm of fantasy and pretence, but the desirable husband shows himself eminently practical, competent to grapple with the needs and exactions of every day. Could any woman in her senses call Disraeli eminently practical from the worldly, day-in-day-out marriage point of view?

She turned over the whole question in her mind during that dull period of widow's weeds and solitude, and brought herself finally to a decision. Her dear Dis would not know it for a long time; in the interval he must be stretched on the emotional rack and tested to the utmost, but on the evidence available Mary Anne had given a favourable verdict. In his own element, the political element, he was unsurpassable, and in hers Mary Anne concluded, with a certain mild surprise, and the secret smile born of a thousand married vicissitudes surmounted in safety, she was unsurpassable also.

Beyond that she could rely on secret knowledge not revealed to him. Every marriage succeeds or fails by reason of a presence or absence of knowledge respecting the technique of marriage in the brain of the wife. It occurred to Mary Anne that widows are notoriously gifted in this respect, and that the second marriage of a widow seldom ends in failure.

"She doesn't expect too much," Mary Anne reminded herself musingly, "and she understands how to give. A young bride, unless she was born in the West, wants to take everything and give nothing. Every woman in society, for years, has been

taking from Dis. He appreciates better than any man I know the value of a woman who has something to give in return for being given to. Most men have this knowledge, but they seldom exercise it because most women don't understand giving. Either they don't want to give or they don't know how. Now I want to give, and I know how most exactly."

Having arrived at this decision she made no haste. A year of widowhood must be survived before there could be any question of re-marriage. When it had expired she would be forty-seven and Dis thirty-five. Could any wife however intelligent bridge that physical gulf blasted by the years?

Glancing at herself in the mirror Mary Anne thought that in her case the difficulty scarcely existed. It would be the case of a young-old wife married to an old-young husband. To Disraeli the physical side meant little, and the mental and psychological side everything. He would not even, in later years, need a mistress. The calm happiness of life with her who understood him utterly, combined with the drain on his vitality of an exacting career, would bring about a perfect harmony. That established one had no need of haste. A man was by instinct the hunter, but he must not find himself too sure of his quarry.

June (1838) brought the coronation of the little Queen. Melbourne, her Prime Minister, that polished dilettante, the friend and admirer of Caroline Norton, now in his sixtieth year, had guided the youthful and somewhat egotistical Victoria in the way of queenship with the utmost tact. He possessed a bland insolence which carried him through the difficulties of public life unperturbed. When a member of some deputation asked him almost with tears: "But, my lord, will not the fund-holder suffer?" Melbourne replied cheerfully: "Oh, of course!" leaving the member of the deputation speechless.

Victoria, therefore, under his guidance, was crowned with all pomp and ceremony. Her capital, making the most of the occasion, became very gay. Galleries lined the processional route, covered with carpets and hangings, and the hotels of those days could scarcely accommodate all the distinguished foreign visitors. Disraeli told Sarah of a personage who had two jackets, one of diamonds and the other of turquoises. He forswore the coronation for the quaintest of all reasons, given his love of finery, namely that M.P.'s must wear either court dress or uniform, and he refused to provide himself with court dress.

However, he did go after all, having procured court dress

at the eleventh hour which fitted him admirably and proved that he had a fine leg for a stocking. Typically enough he claimed to have occupied one of the finest seats in the Abbey. The little Queen won his admiration; Melbourne held the sword of State like a butcher; Lady Londonderry, his faithful friend Fanny and admired hostess, looked like an empress among the peeresses.

Mary Anne did not go to the coronation, but shared in its glories. All the M.P.'s were presented with gold medals as souvenirs, and Disraeli gave her his. A year previously no doubt it would have fallen to the faithful Sarah, but all is fair in love and war.

For the moment he forsook love in favour of the junketing and feasting which attended the coronation. The Salisburys gave a magnificent ball attended by all the celebrities, at which he appeared. Mary Anne paid him a pretty compliment, widow though she was, in return for the gold medal.

A review took place in Hyde Park and she invited him to see it from No. 1 Grosvenor Gate. She asked a number of people, but lest she should seem to be giving a party during her year of mourning no one was allowed in the drawing-room except the aged Lord Rolle and Disraeli.

She had singled him out for a privilege, Lord Rolle being allotted the drawing-room merely on account of age. The point was not lost on Disraeli. He went on afterwards to the Londonderrys' superlative banquet at Holdernesse House to which only a hundred and fifty were asked, of whom he made one by favour of the faithful Fanny. It was a riot of orange trees and glittering foreign visitors, with the Duke himself present and the band of Londonderry's regiment playing on the staircase.

Yet barely a fortnight later, on the way to Maidstone wet and hungry, he wrote to Mary Anne telling her that he thought of her always. There was not one line for the faithful Fanny Londonderry who had invited him to a banquet of such splendour that the company stood awestruck at the spectacle.

D'Orsay had once written to him:

> "You will not make love! You will not intrigue! You have your seat; do not risk anything! If you meet with a widow, then marry!"

D'Orsay may or may not have had one particular widow in mind, but his advice was sound. Intrigue and love-making are unsuitable pastimes for a rising politician, a sound party man who intended one day to become Prime Minister. The House

does not view with favour amatory excursions on the part of its promising personalities. Only a title can excuse such lapses to the average legislator. By contrast, to marry a widow of a deceased colleague in his constituency and a respected member of the House would carry Disraeli straight to the hearts of most M.P.'s. This fact cannot have escaped his notice. A wedding between himself and Mary Anne would be looked upon as a true House of Commons marriage.

Taking into consideration his enthusiastic temperament and expansive nature it is difficult to decide exactly to what extent he was in love with Mary Anne in July, 1838. She did not feel at all sure herself. The theatrical streak in him would lead him to dramatise himself as the ideal lover, and his gift of words enable him to express all the correct sentiments in the most appropriate language.

For example he wrote from Maidstone that he seized a moment in a room full of bustle and clamour to tell her how much he loved her. The picture is almost too perfect, the good deed too good. A lesser man, but a more sincere lover might have forgotten to mention the bustle and clamour and written simply: "Darling, I've just one spare moment to tell you how much I love you." Disraeli, with a faultless eye for effect, put in the bustle and clamour in order to enhance the quality of the love. "Distracted as I am," he implies, "and who could be otherwise with this hell going on all round me, my thoughts still turn to you because I love you so."

Disraeli was perfectly right, but then he understood women. The shy, self-effacing lover makes no effect on them because they despise a man who lacks the confidence in himself to insist on being taken at his own valuation, and that a high one. Therefore Disraeli exalted himself in Mary Anne's eyes. He portrayed her lover as the popular young member for Maidstone harassed on all sides by supporters, agents, and admirers, yet turning to her in the heat of battle to tell her how much he loved her. Mary Anne was not unimpressed.

Apart from that she knew him so well. She had always been a man's woman, with no fantastic ideas of her own importance. She understood perfectly the essential task of a woman, namely, to please a man worth pleasing. There was no other excuse for a woman's existence, but if she performed successfully her essential task equally there was no limit to her fame, her glory, or her reward. In the first place she had pleased Wyndham Lewis, and won in return the delights of Pantgwynlais Castle,

which she loathed, and No. 1 Grosvenor Gate, which she loved. If in the second place she pleased Disraeli, and married him, what was there to expect?

Thinking the matter over, Mary Anne sighed. She knew only too well the extent of his debts, or rather she thought she did. Their extent and magnitude were to constitute a continual surprise to her all through her married life with him. Apart from his debts there was nothing to regret. One could not expect the wild passion of youth, but then, at her age, Mary Anne felt no desire for the wild passion of youth. She had put youth and its passions behind her, and her love for Disraeli sprang far more from her mind than from her body. If his passions still remained youthful, and that she doubted, she could assuage them well enough because she was born in the West, because she understood men, and because she grudged nothing to the man she longed for above all other men. Beyond that he was kind, considerate, and grateful. Looking back over the long history of her first marriage, she understood the worth of these virtues. Wyndham Lewis also had been kind, considerate, and grateful, but he lacked the vital spark, the dynamic eagerness of a Disraeli. Wyndham Lewis, born with a golden spoon in his mouth, missed the stark drama, the lovely excitement, of a man at cut and thrust with life. Like every other true woman Mary Anne wanted above all to live; she could have endured hardships, disappointments, even torture, as long as life throbbed with incalculable possibilities instead of dreaming itself away sleepily in some quiet backwater.

Disraeli, she knew, would provide the incalculable possibilities, but could a woman of her age content a man twelve years younger whose future rocketted among the stars? All Mary Anne's experience told her that undoubtedly she could, for the most sound and sensible reasons.

In Disraeli there lived two men, the dauntless gladiator and the frightened child. Socially, for all the Fanny Londonderrys, he would always be a frightened child, and socially Mary Anne never had been and never would be a frightened child. The explanation lay in the fact that Mary Anne descended from a good family of a freeborn race and Disraeli from shadowy ancestors of a race which had been conquered over and over again. His ornate waistcoats and multiplicity of chains advertised the frightened side of him. Once in the House of Commons he did not know what fear meant because as a statesman-to-be he had absolute confidence in himself.

Thus Mary Anne's future with him became plain to her. She must forever mother the frightened child side of him, and take always the greatest care of his health, and save him from brooding and melancholy. He loved to be admired, therefore she must admire him also. Sarah admired him, but then Sarah lived in Buckinghamshire. She could only write letters instead of paying a daily if not hourly tribute. Admiration ministered to the frightened child side of him also. Mary Anne understood perfectly that the self-praise in his letters and conversation amounted to no more than "I did it all by myself, Mummy!" from a little boy.

At heart she was a simple, faithful woman who understood the essentials of life extremely well. She had been born attractive and methodical and twenty-three years of marriage added experience to these natural gifts. To her at this juncture those twenty-three years appeared in the light of an apprenticeship now to be rewarded by a great trust. She had lived through them in preparation for the care of her dear Dizzy, who could not help becoming the greatest figure of the century as long as Mary Anne remained to look after him and relieve him of all petty anxieties.

So she reasoned to herself, back in London in the house at No. 1 Grosvenor Gate with the tiresome business of being a joint executor over and done with, and nothing ahead of her except the social diversions permitted a recently bereaved widow, and the fascination of following Dizzy's career, and discovering from the growing romance of his letters the strength of his new emotion for her. Quite possibly nothing might come of it all, and yet in her heart she knew herself sealed to him for ever. Why else should she feel so peculiarly in sympathy with all his family at Bradenham, and why else should he now share with her all the incidents of his restless, exciting life which formerly he only shared with Sarah?

The session dragged on to its close. Bulwer had been created a baronet. Disraeli made yet another brilliant speech, following O'Connell once more. The triumph must have seemed additionally sweet in the memory of his maiden speech, which also followed a speech of O'Connell's, and overwhelmed Disraeli, as he believed, with the most bitter humiliation. At a great breakfast and a great dinner to the Party he spoke on both occasions with conspicuous success. The session, so fraught with possibilities, which began in anxiety, ended gloriously.

calculated? . . . Yes, among my creditors, I have disciplined that diplomatic ability, that shall some day confound and control cabinets. Oh, my debts, I feel your presence like that of guardian angels!' "

After all, in spite of living continually in debt for nearly twenty years, he had travelled extensively in Europe and the East, cut a figure in the most exclusive circles of London society, and begun a brilliant career in Parliament. Many men of impregnable financial standing have accomplished far less.

There is much also in Fakredeen's contention that debts discipline diplomatic ability. The debtor who can persuade an angry creditor to allow him just a little more time in which to pay is capable of coaxing the most hard-hearted assembly. But for Disraeli's debts he might never have become a successful Chancellor of the Exchequer, or persuaded the house of Rothschild to advance £4,000,000 for the purchase of the Suez Canal shares.

It appears that Corry, Disraeli's private secretary, went to Rothschild and said that Disraeli, then Prime Minister, wanted £4,000,000 the next day. Rothschild picked up a grape, ate it, threw away the skin and asked:

"What is your security?"

"The British Government," answered Corry.

"You shall have it," Rothschild decided instantly, and the money was provided.

Thus Disraeli was enabled to tell the Queen in triumph: "You have it, Madam."

In the past, expenses had always been met by hook or by crook, however high the rate of interest, and the responsibilities of marriage could hardly affect money matters greatly for the worse. Besides, Mary Anne would not come to him penniless. She possessed the life interest in Wyndham's fortune, and the house in Grosvenor Gate. He himself would not always remain, like Fakredeen, the prey of usurers. At the time of their marriage (for, of course, she would marry him; never yet had any of his projects failed ultimately, and no woman existed whom he could not persuade if he set himself to the task) the uncharitable might suggest that he was in love with her money rather than with Mary Anne, but one could afford to ignore such yelpings from the *canaille*. The great thing in life was to succeed. After one had succeeded one could regard what people said with indifference.

Unfortunately people did not wait for the sound of wedding bells in order to make uncharitable comment. Directly it became obvious that he intended to marry Mary Anne, opinion in many quarters decided that her money formed the chief attraction for him.

"Why, otherwise," inquired the wiseacres, "should a brilliant man of thirty-four, with the political world more or less at his feet, want to marry a woman of forty-six? It is common knowledge that he is always at the mercy of moneylenders. Why, during one of his election campaigns the opposition even posted up a list of his debts, and suggested that he ought not to stand for Parliament because he was bankrupt to all intents and purposes!"

If gossip of this kind left Disraeli unmoved it was not without effect on Mary Anne. Her women friends gathered about her and warned her solemnly against becoming the prey of a political fortune-hunter. Who was Disraeli after all? True he had flashed like a meteor across the political sky, but he possessed no real standing in the world. Surely it ill became a woman of Mary Anne's charm and good looks, the widow of a man like Wyndham Lewis, to ally herself with a mere adventurer who no doubt looked to her to provide him with a roof over his head and a means of staving off duns.

Rosina Bulwer showed herself not the least vocal of Mary Anne's friends. It was after all at Rosina's house, in the days when she possessed a house, that Mary Anne first met Disraeli, and Rosina could not absolve herself altogether of responsibility in the matter.

Gazing at Rosina as she continued not to mind her own business, Mary Anne allowed her vivacious mind to dwell on certain quaint features of Rosina's character. True they were great friends, and yet did not Rosina sit there in the role of an unsuccessful wife, for no one could call Rosina's marriage successful in these days, lecturing a successful one? Again, there was that strange note in her behaviour when Wyndham died.

It happened that Lytton Bulwer had given his bride for a wedding present an extremely small spaniel, knowing her passion for dogs. This animal and Wyndham Lewis expired more or less at the same time. Rosina wrote to Mary Anne sympathising with her on the death of Wyndham, but in her letter she declared that her own loss was obviously the heavier of the two.

Also, no one could expect Rosina to like Dizzy, her husband's great friend, one of those writers whose presence in the Hertford Street house always bored Rosina to distraction. Dizzy remained Lytton Bulwer's friend long after he had ceased to delight in Rosina or even remain on terms of friendship with her. No one in consequence could look on Rosina as an unbiased critic.

Yet as Rosina moaned on querulously about Jews and debts and adventurers, the chances of marriage and the absolute necessity of a woman's thinking very carefully because they both knew what men were, Mary Anne found herself becoming ever so slightly inoculated with the poison Rosina was dropping into those ears deliciously concealed by ringlets and adorned with beautiful drop ear-rings. It wasn't only Rosina who talked in this strain; a dozen women had said exactly the same thing. When one came to think about it, who *were* the Disraelis? Heaven alone knew. Beyond the sweet old gentleman living down at Bradenham one could not really trace them. Mary Anne, County on her mother's side, was accustomed all her life to know exactly who people were, and who they had been for generations back. She even recalled the wisdom of Thomas Yate, a walking mine of information about pedigrees, on this subject. What would General Vernon-Graham have said? Even her mother, who married adventurously enough in her own day, expressed misgivings.

Consequently Mary Anne, who was feminine to the last hair of her head, decided to hedge. She told Disraeli she needed a year in which to examine his character and refused to give an immediate decision. Having said that she became once more her light-hearted self. What, after all, was a year, and in the meantime she would need to be persuaded. The urging of his suit by her dear Dizzy could not possibly lack romance and excitement. He always put things so beautifully, and when he warmed to his subject his fine eyes flashed, his lips curled and he looked quite irresistibly handsome.

Disraeli accepted the condition without protest. To an extent he respected her for making it; no woman of taste and good breeding could be expected to fling herself into another man's arms but a few months after the death of her husband.

This year would make little difference in any case because her year of mourning must intervene from Wyndham's death to the date of her remarriage. He knew himself to be by nature too precipitate and impulsive. Isaac before now had warned his

son against these shortcomings and expressed the wish that he could arrive at a calmer frame of mind. His rooms in London adorned with geraniums sent from Bradenham by the pious hand of Sarah, who remembered his love of flowers, would do well enough during the period of probation.

And yet this essay in patience must have cost him a sigh, since all his instincts rebelled against delay; he seemed to have waited all his life to achieve his aims, and only now, in the middle thirties, did the gods grant him a foretaste of success. Young Gladstone, on the contrary, had been rewarded with office in the early twenties. Now that Disraeli longed to marry, the lady insisted on a period of probation, and he must wait a year just as his forefather, Jacob, served Laban seven years for Rachel, only to be fobbed off with Leah and serve a further seven years for Rachel.

Even the Whig Government, whose collapse he had predicted, continued its precarious existence under the guidance of the light-hearted Melbourne, and its end seemed as far off as ever.

Those who knew him, looking on, marvelled more and more at his devotion to Mary Anne, his attentions, his constant calls, his complete preoccupation with this middle-aged flame. It all seemed a far cry from Henrietta, the river parties, the garden parties, the delicious little suppers after the opera, the sophisticated charm and idyllic atmosphere of romance. What they did not understand was that love, either passionate or affectionate, could never, in any circumstances, be the mainspring of his life.

He had tried it once, in the days of Henrietta, realised himself to be in danger, and retreated while there was yet time. He saw that love, in the grand manner, could not exist side by side with ambition. Limitless love for a woman put a man in that woman's power, and power was all Disraeli worshipped. The supreme power must be his, not hers. The day came when he saw that he must choose between Henrietta and ambition and he did not hesitate for a moment. The choice once made was made for ever. Nor did he wish to remain free in order that he might indulge in minor love adventures. He longed for the eternal presence of some affectionate woman who, far from wishing to make him her slave, longed to be his; who would make their home a haven of refuge, intervene between him and all the minor miseries of life, mother him and encourage him; to whom he might return exhausted by the fierce warfare of the House of Commons to gather fresh strength for new campaigns.

This attitude, completely outside their experience, was too difficult of comprehension for the bright brains of Mayfair. Here was a man who, starting with the Radicals, considered barely respectable, had hawked his political charms from Party to Party, and thrown in his lot finally with the Tories because from them he could obtain in due course a safe seat. This charge of inconstancy has always been laid against Disraeli, although Lord Stanley, who sat near Peel on the front Opposition bench in Disraeli's first Parliament, began his career as a Whig, only to serve three times later in life as a Tory Prime Minister. The bright brains of Mayfair would assume, no doubt, that Stanley could exercise his *droit de seigneur* in political beliefs as, possibly, his ancestors had exercised theirs in other directions, whereas Disraeli could only be a time-server.

It had suited his interests, people said, to become a Tory in the last event, and now it suited his interest, after worshipping at the shrine of the beautiful Sheridans, and loving Henrietta, to dazzle the unfortunate Mary Anne, who, as everyone knew, had arrived at the exact age when a woman is likely to make a fool of herself over a man many years her junior. Such conduct as Disraeli's, reprehensible in any event, seemed in still worse taste when the lady in the case was the widow of his brother member for the Borough of Maidstone to whom he owed the seat in Parliament to gain which he had cheerfully revised his political principles over and over again.

Of all this Disraeli took not the slightest heed. He persuaded himself that he was in love, and proceeded to engage himself with the fine flower of delectable courtships.

The next few years saw three remarkable marriages. To take the most important first, the little Queen married Albert, the youngest son of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg.

He had been aimed at her since boyhood, and trained ruthlessly for his future position of Prince Consort of England by his tutor, Florschütz, and Baron Stockmar, that mysterious and slightly sinister figure who had affected so gravely the early years of the Victorian era. The influence of Stockmar on Albert and Baroness Lehzen, her governess, on Victoria definitely affected English history. Not the least important service to his adopted country of Albert the Good consisted in getting rid of Lehzen. No one knows how he managed it, but one day she was there and the next she was missing. For his life to be tolerable either Lehzen or he had to go.

He came on a visit to be looked over by Victoria, and went

away. He returned later, and her rather half-hearted first impressions of him became transformed into definite admiration. She proposed to him, being as it were the senior officer on parade, and Albert accepted her, with a sad heart because he loved the surroundings of his little German Court, and the roses that grew there, and the simple pleasures to which he had been accustomed, but Stockmar had brought him up to become Prince Consort of England, and there was no turning back.

Thus he formed one thread in the lives of Mary Anne and Disraeli, who seems to have admired him. At any rate, by referring to him after his death in suitable terms Disraeli won the affection and esteem of Queen Victoria and retained them to the end.

The second remarkable marriage was that of Gladstone to Catherine Glynne, an alliance on his part of a wealthy and respectable middle-class person to a girl of ancient family. Like the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert it was most successful. Like that marriage also it was fruitful; Queen Victoria bore nine children, all of whom survived, and Mrs. Gladstone eight, seven of whom survived.

Catherine, their daughter, has left a very tender and affectionate picture of them in her diary. They too were linked intimately with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and also with Disraeli and Mary Anne. With Queen Victoria Gladstone never got on, or perhaps it would be more proper to write that Queen Victoria never got on with Mr. Gladstone. Her Majesty sometimes went so far as to give good advice to Mrs. Gladstone, written as from one wife to another, setting out the care which Mr. Gladstone ought to take of his health.

If Gladstone had not always been so rich he might have found some means of approach to Queen Victoria because, as Disraeli so truly remarked, putting his words in the mouth of Fakredeen, among his creditors he would have disciplined that diplomatic ability that confounds and controls Cabinets. To have confounded Queen Victoria might have brought Gladstone perilously near high treason, but at least he might have controlled her, as Disraeli did.

Unfortunately the rich are ever dogmatic, hence Mr. Gladstone's dogmatism, and as Queen Victoria was still richer than he and consequently more dogmatic, they approached one another on a war footing. The third remarkable marriage was Mary Anne's and Disraeli's. Unlike that of Queen Victoria and the Gladstones it was childless. Mary Anne used to call Disraeli's

novels her children, but in reality he was her child. With all respect to Queen Victoria and the Gladstones, Mary Anne's marriage was the most successful of the three, for the Queen and the Gladstones had fewer difficulties with which to contend, seeing all were rich and in the enjoyment of influential family connections. Mary Anne and Disraeli were free-lances, with nothing behind them except Bradenham as a country resort, and such fortune as Wyndham Lewis left Mary Anne. Disraeli's emoluments as a Cabinet minister and the money he made from his novels must be called, in the language of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, occasional profits.

Mary Anne and Disraeli found in one another an ideal comradeship even more satisfactory than that of the Gladstones, for William, a booming evangelical person, could never, in all probability, have brought himself down quite to the level of his wife, whereas Disraeli always professed to look up to his; nor is there any record that Mrs. Gladstone ever cut William's hair.

By the strange decree of fate these three important marriages were complementary and interlinked, and affected the British Empire as we know it to-day more vitally than any other three marriages in history. Queen Victoria at her own expense erected a memorial to Disraeli in Hughenden Church over the seat in the chancel which he occupied during his life. The inscription read:

> "To the dear and honoured memory of Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, this memorial is placed by his grateful Sovereign and Friend, Victoria, R.I. 'Kings love him that speaketh right,' Proverbs, xvi, 13. February 27th, 1882."

She did not erect a memorial to Mr. Gladstone.

IV

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

THERE now began Mary Anne's courtship by a very good man. The most distinguished of Disraeli's biographers, George Earle Buckle, has written of him:

"Artificial as he was in many ways, few men have more relished the simpler sources of happiness: wife and home, reading and writing, trees, flowers, and birds, old friends and small kindnesses."

This is an almost perfect description, and even the qualifying clause describing him as artificial hardly detracts from his character since most people are artificial in their varying degrees. One might almost quote of him a passage from the great poet of his race, Isaiah:

"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.

"He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him: his waters shall be sure.

"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

The man who cherished Sarah's geranium sent from Bradenham to brighten his rooms in Duke Street could not help displaying sensibility and sympathy where a woman was concerned. In consequence Mary Anne entered upon a wooing of a poetic and romantic nature which any woman might have envied.

It was all so different from that other courtship of twenty three years ago, when she competed with many pretty girls amid the life and laughter of the spa at Hotwells for the favour of Wyndham Lewis and danced her way into his heart at General Vernon-Graham's ball. Then, indirectly, she sought instead of being sought, and success or failure turned on a curve of

breast or shoulder, the expression of a glance; in those days she longed desperately to attract and used every art to appear at her most desirable.

Now the attitudes were reversed. She did not even feel sure as yet that she wanted to attract Disraeli to an extent that ultimately must involve her in a second marriage. At twenty-three she longed for marriage and experience like any other girl, but now she had had all that. Her relationship with him at the moment impressed her as very happy. They had passed from acquaintanceship to friendship and he interested her deeply, but surely their association could well continue on this plane?

As soon as she asked herself the question she knew the answer. Obviously it could not do anything of the kind. They must either be more to one another or less. He had made up his mind to marry her, and it was his boast that he never failed in any enterprise which he undertook seriously.

Thereupon she determined to let affairs take their course. If he could persuade her, let him persuade her. She for her part would remain his affectionate friend and if he wished to evoke deeper emotion the inspiration must come from him.

Watching his behaviour she could not help but admire. The end of the session found him in the peace of Bradenham, parted from her as he did not fail to point out. Bradenham never looked more beautiful, but even for him, who loved it, the beauty of trees and flowers meant little if the one woman in all the world lingered elsewhere. Consequently nothing would do but that she must stay at Bradenham. He wanted to talk to her and to her alone.

She knew she ought not to consent, and yet consented. That was in August, at a period when the week-end visit had not become fashionable. Life moved leisurely and time counted for very little. Mary Anne, having arrived at Bradenham, made a long stay.

After all, why not, since nowadays she felt singularly like one of the family? As Disraeli had pointed out long before, they all loved her, from gentle old Isaac, with failing sight, and Sarah, the faithful sister, to Jem and Ralph the younger brothers, a little in awe of this fashionable lady from London, except that no one could remain in awe of Mary Anne for very long. That represented her essential charm. She possessed a vivacity and kindness which put everyone at his ease and made

everyone happy. They all longed for her to come to Bradenham and hated her to go away.

Isaac, peering at her laughing face, mused with the slow wisdom of the aged on this new fancy of Ben's. She was not his first, but lately since his election to Parliament the boy seemed to have acquired a calm and steadiness of disposition such as Isaac had always desired. It was quite plain to an old man looking on that he wanted to wed Mary Anne, and equally plain that she could not make up her mind, even though already Ben had become a great man. With all his heart Isaac longed for her to make it up in Ben's favour. The boy had never been really strong; he lived on his nerves and his ambitions drove him to the point of exhaustion. If only this kind, wise, sensible woman would throw in her lot with Ben's, all anxiety would be lifted from Isaac and when the time came he could be gathered to his fathers in peace.

Naturally Sarah, too, was on Ben's side. Considering Mary Anne with a woman's unequalled knowledge of her own sex, she felt not the slightest misgiving. Mary Anne, Sarah knew, had a sweet nature and a faithful, affectionate heart. She was kind also, as witness her solicitude for Isaac, an old man nearly blind. Besides, she was country born and bred with a liking for country house life equal to Ben's, sharing his passion for trees and flowers.

Most important of all, Sarah could see that she admired Ben, and no one understood better than Sarah his eternal need for admiration. It did not arise so much from vanity as from sensitiveness and a longing to feel appreciated. Sarah could look back calmly at this stage of his career on those disastrous early elections, but she did not care to think what might have been their result on him if he had lacked her to sympathise with him and console him. Now his feet were firmly planted on the path to fame, but inevitably he would encounter disappointments, and she could not always be at his side. Letters were all very well, but they lacked the warmth of human companionship. If Mary Anne married him she need never leave him. She could rejoice with him in moments of triumph and gather his head against her breast in moments of defeat and despair.

As for Disraeli, he had not a thought beyond Mary Anne. His family, which in the ordinary course of events he loved, had dissolved into illimitable distances. With all the fanaticism of his nature, when his interest was aroused, he lived devoted

singly and solely to Mary Anne. She was there in his home among his own surroundings, and surely the genius of Bradenham, the family gods of the hearth, would influence her in his favour? Sometimes he wondered almost incredulously why he wanted Mary Anne so much, and why, as it seemed to him from time to time, she wanted him so little. He was obsessed with longing and his judgment no longer remained clear.

He was thirty-four and she was forty-six. In a man of thirty-four emotions and passions still hold sway, however controlled by an iron will and a ruthless ambition. A woman of forty-six consults her intelligence in almost every instance where a man is concerned. If she married him this was Mary Anne's last chance. Supposing her marriage proved a failure, she would remain doomed for life. At thirty-four Disraeli, in the event of an unfortunate marriage, could expect consolation elsewhere. This in such an event Mary Anne could not expect and would hardly desire. All her instincts sounded the note of caution while she lingered at Bradenham from summer into autumn, trying to sort out the tangled skein of her thoughts.

No woman of the slightest sensibility could fail to be affected by such a young and ardent lover as Disraeli. He appealed both to her normal feminine instincts and the maternal instinct which he aroused and always had aroused. It seemed so natural that this amazingly youthful genius should desire the whole world for his plaything and so inevitable that he should be disappointed. Something deep in her heart told her he would not be disappointed, but the voice sounded too still and small to trust, so that, like Sarah, she longed to be at hand whenever the black waters of melancholy closed over his soul.

Otherwise she found him entirely fascinating. He remembered every woodland path and every viewpoint that she had preferred during her previous visits and made the renewal of her acquaintance with them so many pious pilgrimages. Wandering with her through the parkland of Bradenham he talked without ceasing of his future, in that voice every tone of which she knew and loved. For her he dissected the strength and weakness of Stanley and Lyndhurst, Peel and Melbourne, Palmerston (that old hack!) and Lord John Russell. Theirs were names of note for which he showed not the slightest respect. His opinion was the same as in respect of Bulwer and Macaulay as orators—that he could floor them all. She found something shining and terrible in his unique self-confidence.

The day came when she must say good-bye to Bradenham,

and to him. It would be fatal to outstay his mood of acute longing. She made her farewells and left, half-glad and half-sad. No. 1 Grosvenor Gate on her return seemed a little forlorn. The presence of Wyndham still haunted it vaguely never to be exorcised except by another presence more assured and vital.

Disraeli told her that now he found Bradenham unbearable. In all the house and park he discovered no joy and he could turn his mind to nothing. He had lived in paradise and now was cast out. He submitted to the decrees of fate and at the same time could see no reason why this misery should come upon him.

Almost before she found time to appraise this mood of his he announced his early departure for London in order to see her again if only for a few days. Meanwhile he worked on the great tragedy.

At that she smiled because for love of her he had begun once more to write poetry, abandoned since the failure of the *Revolutionary Epick*, written after the manner of Milton. The title of the new masterpiece was *Alarcos*, and the style recalled that of Shakespeare.

Disraeli never lacked literary courage. In *Venetia* he had written poems on behalf of two characters, one of whom impersonated Byron and the other Shelley, and the step from Byron and Shelley to Shakespeare caused him not one moment's hesitation. In the dedication of *Alarcos* to Lord Francis Egerton, a poet after a fashion, Disraeli said that the inspiration for it came to him during his voyage to the Mediterranean; he had heard the strange and terrible tale while rambling in the Sierras of Andalusia.

Unfortunately the gloom of the tale prevented anyone from producing Disraeli's poetic drama as a stage play at the period when it was written. *Alarcos* enjoyed a certain fame among Society, but the critics ignored it, as well they might, for Barnes of *The Times* had summed up Disraeli as a poet when he remarked that the tone was high, but the sound monotonous. Years afterward, when Disraeli became Prime Minister, *Alarcos* ran for five weeks at Astley's Theatre Royal, and failed from the box-office point of view. No doubt Mary Anne considered it marvellous. She had been allowed to read it bit by bit as the author composed it.

On his arrival in London, Disraeli dined with her and others at No. 1 Grosvenor Gate, and sent Sarah a good story about the

chef at Crockford's with whom that club parted, because he was considered too expensive. Either from necessity or design he made only a flying visit and returned shortly afterwards to Bradenham. Thence the wooing of Mary Anne continued.

He remained in London just long enough for her to regret the briefness of his visit. In that action he may have been wise, because a man of literary gifts expresses himself more memorably in his love-letters than by word of mouth. In addition words heard once may or may not linger in the recollection of the beloved, but a letter survives to be read and re-read. Besides, Mary Anne made a habit of keeping her letters. At her death every scrap of writing Disraeli had ever sent her was found carefully preserved. Therefore if he poured out his soul on paper, as he proceeded to do, the result would produce a cumulative effect, for a new meaning can be discovered in a love-letter read for the hundredth time.

At Bradenham, for this was mid-October, a frost had killed all the flowers. Disraeli considered their fate no more bleak than that of Mary Anne's lover separated from his love. He seems to have indulged in the fond foolishness common to all lovers, for he wrote her name in large letters and set it on his writing-table. Everyone who has ever been in love, whether man or woman, has done the same, so that in love the great and the humble meet on common ground. Mary Anne must have smiled at this news, but tenderly.

Chiefly he took refuge in his poetic tragedy, pouring into it all his hopeless longing for Mary Anne distant from him in London. A writer in love is more fortunate than the rest of mankind. His writings give him an outlet for the feelings evoked by one particular woman; all his love scenes are written for her, and when the hero speaks to the heroine in moving words it is really the writer speaking to his adored. Love also stimulates a writer's creative instinct; he can produce in consequence work of a quality impossible to him at normal periods of his life. In a sense Mary Anne was bringing *Alarcos* to birth, because her influence on Disraeli flung him into a fury of composition, so that his hand could not move fast enough across the paper to accompany the quick working of his brain.

He told her, with a lover's pathetic faith, that she would care for such minute personal details, all the occupations of the day. It was his play which absorbed him above all things because he believed she would find it even more wonderful than she anticipated. He was invariably happy in the act of writing;

everything that he wrote seemed to him marvellous at the time, even if in later years he altered his opinion, and as in the case of *Vivian Grey*, came to despise the literary child which arrived amid such enthusiasm on the part of its parent. He sent her flowers from Bradenham and declined in a mock-magnificent phrase to be jealous because she was meeting other men in London. "When the eagle leaves you the vultures return. There! That is sublime."

Mary Anne, reading and re-reading his letters, could not fail to notice that the motive of all of them was the same: that he loved her and could not bear to be away from her. Every letter of hers which reached him intensified his longing for her. In one of his own he wrote that he wished never to be away from her.

Supposing Disraeli to have had a diabolical insight into the nature of the female, he could not have sounded a more fortunate note. There is no woman in existence who, however little she wants a particular man, does not feel flattered to hear that he cannot bear to be parted from her. But Mary Anne, in spite of all the wisdom of her women friends, including Rosina, did want Disraeli. She must have done, because, in the light of future happenings, it is certain they were united by some psychological link which nothing could have broken. From the very beginning of the world they had been pre-ordained to each other, a genius of thirty-four and a middle-aged woman of forty-six. It seems incredible but it is true.

And so he sent her such remaining flowers as the gardens of Bradenham could afford. There were limitations of lovers in the early nineteenth century. To-day he could have telephoned from Bradenham and ordered her the pick of the flowers of Europe. As it was he sent her, with vast labours of packing, the last of the sweet peas. If they arrived withered, at least they constituted themselves love's messengers, and what woman can resist flowers sent by a man who adores her?

Mary Anne, in return, aware of his one overmastering interest apart from her, sent him political news. It was one of her affectations that she pretended to hate politics. Few women have enjoyed a more acute and practical political sense. The news found her lover not ungrateful and at the same time momentarily in despair about his tragedy, which for once fell short of his expectations. He could not imagine writing tragedies less remarkable than Shakespeare's. This confession is one of his greatest extravagances. He added splendidly:

"In Fame as well as Love my motto is 'All or Nothing,' because I prefer happy obscurity to mediocre reputation."

Could any woman resist such protestations? It depends greatly on the manner in which they are made. Mary Anne's love-letters from Disraeli stand out among his writings on account of their simplicity and sincerity. For once in his life he had avoided words for the sake of words, always his weakness. His letters to her have the unaffected charm of those which he wrote to Sarah and are even more simple and natural. It may well have been that Mary Anne's simplicity of heart controlled his style of writing, for she was the last person likely to admire fine writing, as her own letters prove. The substance rather than the form of a letter would be likely to appeal to her, for she was a good housekeeper, appreciating neatness, order, and method; that Disraeli felt lonely on account of her, wished to send her flowers, and wanted to write a dramatic tragedy in honour of her, equal to one of Shakespeare's, were things she could understand.

Soon, however, she found him writing to her about something other than love, no less than a private quarrel concerned with the Maidstone which he had declared meant nothing to him, except as a place where she and he had been happy together. A petition had been launched against the Conservative who took Wyndham Lewis' place, and the petitioners' counsel seemed to imply that Disraeli had offered the electors bribes and not paid them. The proceedings fell through because Wyndham Lewis' successor resigned, so that the situation regarding Disraeli could not be cleared up. Mary Anne, who in her time influenced the spending of forty thousand pounds in Maidstone for political purposes, must have viewed the matter with interest.

Disraeli took his favourite course of writing to the papers. He declared that the statement of Charles Austin, counsel for the petitioners, was utterly false. He continued:

"The whole expenses of the contest in question were defrayed by my lamented colleague and I discharged to him my moiety of these expenses." Hoping to goad Austin into a duel he went on to write about "the blustering artifice of a rhetorical hireling availing himself of the vile license of a loose-tongued lawyer."

To Mary Anne, than whom none could have been more aware to what extent Disraeli contributed to the expenses at Maidstone, this conduct on his part must have seemed chivalrous and lion-hearted. Unfortunately, Mr. Austin, instead of oiling

his pistols and sending a challenge, appealed to the Court of Queen's Bench. Disraeli consoled Mary Anne for this anti-climax by reflecting that at least she would be spared anxiety for his life.

Austin stated that his charges were not against Disraeli, but Disraeli's Party, and Disraeli's counsel apologised to the court, which considered the apology inadequate. Therefore Disraeli came up to be sentenced and made a long and remarkable speech, in which he expressed not only regret, but mortification for what he had done, in view of the fact that the charge had not been made against him, but against his Party.

Having apologised he proceeded, more in sorrow than in anger, to remark that although many illustrious statesmen had sprung from the Bar of England, there was, in the principles on which the practice of that Bar is based, a taint of arrogance. He then left his case with confidence to the merciful consideration of my lords. He looked to the Bench to shield him from the vengeance of an irritated and powerful profession.

The Attorney-General accepted this apology, delicately ignoring Disraeli's remark about the principles of the Bar of England. Consequently he could tell Mary Anne jubilantly about the success of the speech, and the congratulations he had received, talking as usual in superlatives. After that he returned to Bradenham, travelling from London to Maidenhead in a train drawn by an engine that attained a speed of no less than thirty-six miles an hour, to find his father also delighted about the speech.

It was now November, and Mary Anne, in the house at Grosvenor Gate, dreamed over the happenings of the autumn and winter. Throughout her stay at Bradenham she had seen in Disraeli nothing but the ardent lover who lived only for her. On her return he merged into a writer of perfect love-letters and a poet on fire to rival Shakespeare in her honour. He had even told her that his interest in politics was eclipsed by his interest in her. Yet no sooner did the attack on him at Maidstone eventuate than he leaped to defend himself, and in a measure her, with all the spirit in which once he had attacked O'Connell. Truly a strange, complex, fascinating, adorable person, but very dangerous from a woman's point of view. There could be no defence on the part of any woman against charm such as his. Directly she heard the voice which attracted her so murmuring tendernesses, she felt an irresistible impulse to comply with all his wishes, marry him, and live that life of

perfect happiness which, so he said, must inevitably be the result of their marriage.

Whenever, through discretion or an instinct of self-preservation, she left Bradenham, there followed her a sequence of inspired love-letters which recounted his despair at her absence and his longing for her presence.

He was sitting at Bradenham dreaming about her, too lazy to write, but determined to begin again on the following day. He loved her very much, and congratulations about his speech in the Court of Queen's Bench continued to pour in. He merely told her this in order to please her. After all, the speech by this time was an old story.

He had been ill with influenza once more, and in the after-weakness of this complaint, which recurred almost annually, he dispaired once more of his poetic tragedy. The influenza returned, and in spite of it he determined to meet her as they had arranged to meet.

They did meet, and Mary Anne left him cheered and comforted as only she knew how, for he ceased to sound the note of love to the exclusion of all others and sent her a budget of local gossip. D'Orsay and others arrived on horseback to invite him to dine with Lord Carrington at Wycombe Abbey, where D'Orsay was staying. Disraeli refused, because he had not entered Wycombe Abbey for six years, but Carrington's brother-in-law insisted, so he went, and dined, and buried the hatchet.

He found there various beautiful and charming ladies, Lady Chesterfield and Mrs. Anson, whose own hair, when she wore the costume of a Greek, reached to the calf of her leg. He told them of his recent meeting with Mary Anne as she passed through Wycombe.

Whether it was the mention of these beautiful and charming ladies, or feminine strategy, or memory of some imagined slight during her meeting with him, who can say? but a cold silence descended on Mary Anne and her letters came no more to Bradenham. Thereupon her lover, in slightly more formal language than usual, reproached her with all the dignity of his wounded feelings.

False pride, he declared, should not stop his complaining about her strange and prolonged silence. Heaven knew he was not exacting, and if it bored her to write to him, that of course was sufficient excuse for not writing. She had demanded a year for the study of his character; perhaps such of that year

as had passed convinced her that they possessed nothing in common. In that case his feelings did not come into the matter, riven though they were, but he refused to believe that she had arrived at such a deplorable conclusion until she told him so in so many words.

Lovers' quarrels he looked upon merely as drugs to revive feelings which had ceased to exist. As far as he was concerned he did not suffer from too little, or dead, love, but too much. Apart from that he had decided not to visit Wycombe Abbey. D'Orsay was coming to stay. . . .

Whatever Mary Anne wrote in reply, she wrote it handsomely. No doubt, after the manner of women, she had tormented him from a purely scientific point of view to see what would happen. He responded, as she saw, more completely than any woman could desire or deserve. If he had not fallen genuinely in love with her he would have written:

"My darling Mary Anne,

"You don't write to me any more, but who cares? There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. I adore you, but I refuse to be a door-mat for you to wipe your shoes on. If you don't want someone who loves you better than anyone else in the world just say so, and I won't bother you any more. I'm so glad D'Orsay's coming here to shoot. My men friends mean so much more to me than my women friends. God bless you.

"Dis."

This fact was not lost on Mary Anne. If she at her age could reduce him, at his, to such a condition of hurt pride and wounded vanity, it seemed that her influence over him might be strong enough to make a happy marriage possible. Consequently she became mildly apologetic, and the result repayed her a thousandfold.

In the first place he told her that he was grateful, but that she had ruined his health for the time being and that he lay prostrate on his sofa. From the psychological point of view this is very interesting.

He may have lain postrate on his sofa or he may have been galloping over Buckinghamshire on a horse, but the odds are he wrote the truth. In that case he conformed to a type well known to psychologists which always, in the face of opposition or defeat, takes refuge in illness. This type approximates to

the child which said that nobody loved it and so it would go out into the garden and eat worms, having eaten the day before, in its mental distress, two smooth ones and a woolly one.

The idea is to excite sympathy in the person who is the cause of all the agitation. Quite possibly wounded vanity really made Disraelli ill, and he did betake himself to his sofa. That was not all. He continued with a list of all the invitations he had refused on account of Mary Anne's cruelty. Even the beloved D'Orsay, when he arrived, was a bore. Disraeli congratulated himself that D'Orsay remarked, in the classic phrase of the Englishman: "It is a fine day. Let us go out and kill something," and departed accordingly with his gun to the slaughter.

Disraeli refused to accompany him on the plea of ill-health, and declared to Mary Anne that he hated the sight of D'Orsay's arrival and loved the sight of his departure, and this, mark you, in the case of his best man-friend.

So now Mary Anne could realise what she had done by her cruel and heartless behaviour: struck down a rising young politician and future statesman with what approached a nervous breakdown; caused him to decline invitations from my lords Chandos and Carrington and refuse to attend the Quarter Sessions, a positively hilarious entertainment; last but not least, sulk in his room while D'Orsay the brilliant, the charming, the *preux chevalier*, went out with a gun to kill things.

Messalina, Cleopatra, and Poppæa all rolled into one never accomplished such ruin, and it would be obliging of Mary Anne, except that she disposed of a heart of flint and lacked all sensibility, to consider herself crucified.

The final stab he delivered in these words:

"What are friends . . . if there is a cloud between you and the being you adore?" thereby casting D'Orsay and my lords Chandos and Carrington on to the dustheap of futility.

The next day he wrote that he was mad with love and his passion was frenzy.

A wise woman like Mary Anne would take this with a grain of salt, except that women are attracted by exaggeration where they themselves are concerned. She would know in her heart that a man, mad with love in a frenzy of passion, lacked the clearness of brain to be so articulate and describe his condition, in writing, to a nicety. Men mad with love are not so coherent either in speech or writing. She did the wisest thing she could possibly have done. She promised to meet him.

Whatever passed between them left him completely hers, for he addressed her shortly after as sweetest and dearest of women. For all that Mary Anne remained faintly aloof.

From her point of view he swung so quickly from one extreme to the other. Now he lay at her feet, now he reproached her for not writing. At one second he was fighting the electors of Maidstone, their counsel, and the Queen's Bench, tooth, claw, and nail, and at the next he lay on his sofa completely extenuated because she had seemed unkind to him.

Mary Anne, summing up the situation, felt that to live with a man like this resembled complete chaos. He had too many moods, his nerves were insufficiently under control, he was too much the egoist altogether. Such a man perpetually made demands and gave nothing in return. His type sponged on women for sympathy and after that went their way. What after all could she anticipate from him? Only occasional kindness, when his innermost soul was not being ravaged by something, beyond her comprehension, she had either done or omitted to do. Apart from that there were his brilliance and his debts. One could pay too high a price for brilliance, and no one of her prudent disposition could esteem debts.

The fact was that he clashed with all Mary Anne's traditions of birth and upbringing. Her father had been a sailor, a clean-cut, executive person. Wyndham, her dear Wyndham, who had died, ultimately might not have fulfilled all one's fondest wishes in respect of a husband, and in spite of his commission in the militia remained far from clean-cut and executive, but at any rate he justified his existence, kept out of debt, and suffered from none of these eccentric moods. At forty-six, Mary Anne told herself, a woman required not only affection and that untellable protectiveness which the nicest kind of man exercised on behalf of women, but also peace. How could she possibly find peace with her Dis?

To be perfectly brutal he had neither background nor home except his father's house at Bradenham. He flitted, an exotic ghost, through the drawing-rooms of Mayfair and scraped up with difficulty the interest on his debts. True, influential and powerful men were almost prepared to back his political career on the strength of less than a year in Parliament, but apart from that a man had to live. Could she, so far as she knew, depend on him, sentimentally and physically, so completely that she would be wise to share with him her five thousand a year and the house at No. 1 Grosvenor Gate? All the bitter

wisdom of women concerning men who fail to pay their way overwhelmed her. She had prophesied a unique future for him, but for practical purposes that remained a dream. Even women made mistakes. Supposing she married a second-rate political adventurer, if that was what he proved to be, to what sort of an old age could she look forward?

Thereupon Mary Anne hardened her heart, took up a firm stand, and set out in plain words the situation as she saw it. She repeated, for what it was worth, the wisdom of her women friends. She explained to her dear Dis exactly how he looked in the light of a husband from these women's point of view. She did it kindly but deliberately. She hoped he would be able to reassure her, supply her with arguments for the defeat of her wise women friends, and set her mind at rest.

With the strange vanity of his type Disraeli scorned to do any of these things. He felt deeply hurt. His unshakable conviction as to his future glory left him unable to understand the point of view of anyone who doubted it. The subject of his debts remained so painful when mentioned by a woman that his over-sensitive pride revolted. He overflowed with bitterness, and proud also, she asked him to leave No. 1 Grosvenor Gate. He must have wounded her very deeply, because West-country women are, above all, kind.

A lesser man would have accepted defeat, apologised and asked to be forgiven. It was not the least of Disraeli's splendours that he never acknowledged defeat. If anyone attacked him, even the woman he loved, he hit back with all the force at his disposal. In this instance he struck at Mary Anne without mercy. That his tactics were sound is proved by the fact that she kept the letter throughout her life together with everything else he had written to her.

In this almost terrible letter he explained candidly that when at first he proposed marriage he was not in love with her; he merely wished for a home and to please his father who longed for him to settle down. After that the charm and the many virtues of Mary Anne caused him to fall genuinely in love with her.

As far as her money was concerned it meant nothing to him. She did not possess a fortune sufficiently important to tempt him, and marriage with her would not advance him one step socially. He could live quite comfortably until his father died, when he would inherit sufficient money to settle his debts. He dismissed the question of money in a biting phrase:

"I would not condescend to be the minion of a princess; and not all the gold of Ophir should lead me to the altar."

Poor Mary Anne! She was certainly no princess and possessed infinitely less than all the gold of Ophir. It seemed hard to be told that alike as a person and an heiress she held no sway over the brilliant young Mr. Disraeli. He merely admired certain features of her character, pitied her for the sorrows she had undergone so recently, and deigned to offer her the tribute of his love.

Having said that much he proceeded to give her the satisfaction of knowing that she had poisoned his life, princess or no princess. Moreover, she had made him a laughing-stock, or would do so directly the news of their broken association spread abroad. Owing to her calculated cruelty he preserved nothing but his self-respect.

She herself could not hope to go unscathed. For a time she might amuse herself, but she would live to regret a faithful heart scorned. He signed himself simply "D."

It is no exaggeration to say that Mary Anne found herself completely crushed by this letter. For the first, and probably the last time she encountered the iron streak in Disraeli's character, which allowed him in a crisis to overcome the sense of inferiority which afflicted him during his youth, and disappeared gradually as, step by step, he fulfilled his destiny. Let anyone attack him unjustly, even the woman he loved, and he had only one instinct, to shatter his assailant by the most drastic means at his disposal.

It is not at all certain that Mary Anne meant to quarrel seriously, or to end their association, or even that she told him to leave her house. Much the most likely explanation of her behaviour is that she fell a victim to one of those emotional crises which often afflict a woman who is on the verge of committing herself finally in favour of a particular man, and spoke in a blind panic, hardly knowing what she said. In a normal frame of mind her kind heart and genuine affection for Disraeli would have prevented her from using words deliberately calculated to wound his feelings. If she had made up her mind to part with him she would have parted kindly without recrimination.

We may conclude therefore, that she had not made up her mind at all, and longed to have it made up for her. That service Disraeli duly performed. His letter contained, among other expressions, the ominous word "farewell." After it came the passage sketching her unhappy future with no one to

love her faithfully, because she had spurned the only man likely to do so.

Instantly in Mary Anne's heart one panic succeeded another. Originally she had felt afraid to commit herself; now she feared lest the opportunity to commit herself might have vanished for ever. Could she ever placate this impregnable young man who even in his anguish, and he admitted anguish, bade her farewell, and drew for her a mournful picture of her lonely old age?

In case there might remain the slightest chance she picked up her pen and wrote straight from her heart that he was for God's sake to come to her because she was ill and almost distracted. She had never asked him to leave her house or thought about money. She ended, in words characteristic of Mary Anne: "I am devoted to you."

Naturally he forgave her. They had never quarrelled seriously before and in the joy of making up the quarrel he forgot all his bitterness. The fact that a reconciliation took place so quickly supports the theory that Disraeli really married for love and not for money, even if his crushing letter to Mary Anne, when, as he alleged, she told him to leave her house, did not confirm it.

As he assured her, she was nothing like rich enough to tempt a man of his achievements and gifts purely on the score of money. He saw in her the ideal wife for a man of his type, and he was not mistaken. The world could say what it liked of their approaching marriage; they loved one another sufficiently to laugh at the world's opinion: "They say—what say they?—let them say!" Mary Anne even made a little family joke of the world's uncharitableness. She used to remark, in the days when she was Disraeli's happy wife:

"Dizzy married me for my money, but if he had the chance again he would marry me for love." There is not recorded a word or an action of his which disproves her statement.

Thus a little later he was able to tell Sarah that "we" dined at Scrope's, the said William Scrope being a connection of the Vineys. The course of love ran smoothly and Mary Anne's young man distinguished himself in a speech on the second reading of a bill for reforming Irish corporations.

Melbourne's Government staggered on to its end. In May, 1839, their majority fell as low as five, and with his invariable light-heartedness Melbourne resigned.

It has become the fashion to despise Melbourne for a political

flaneur and opportunist, but no man was ever more suited to the time and political situation. The little Queen, barely two years on the throne, displayed alike a dominant personality and a vast ignorance of public affairs. Melbourne understood public affairs and what was still more important he understood women. In all her long reign three men stood pre-eminent for the tact and discretion of their approach to Queen Victoria: Melbourne was one, Disraeli in after life the second, and Randall Davidson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, the third.

To appreciate Melbourne's success in leading the little Queen by a silken thread in the way she should go we have only to imagine what might have happened if Gladstone had been born twenty years earlier and become Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister. As events fell out the coincidence of Melbourne's ministry with the Queen's accession seemed like the intervention of providence. It was a Whig ministry and the Whigs had outlived their usefulness for the time being, but Melbourne had not outlived his. He sauntered through the business of governing with an air, and his charm and his ripe wisdom captivated the Queen, just as, it would seem, she captivated him.

Even when, his majority having fallen to five, he resigned, rather than face defeat, the gods fought on his side, for owing to a strange blunder committed by Peel which aroused all the stubbornness of which the little Queen was capable, Melbourne formed another Whig Government which lingered on, as threatened men and Governments will, until the year 1841.

It is written of Melbourne that he favoured conciliation in regard to Ireland and that generally his tenure of office was marked by moderation. Years afterwards, seated in Melbourne's place, Disraeli may well have recalled the tact of that statesman in regard to Queen Victoria, and the results it achieved, and modelled his own conduct to an extent on that of Melbourne.

When Melbourne resigned Mary Anne anticipated, not without reason, the prospect of office for Disraeli. The Queen sent for the Duke of Wellington, who advised her to send for Peel. Disraeli saw him in his carriage in full dress passing the Carlton on his way to the palace. Peel declared on the 8th of May that he was ready to form a Government.

On May 10th, Disraeli sent Mary Anne a note containing sad news. Peel had refused to form a Government purely on account of the famous Bedchamber Question.

In the case of a queen the Officials of the Bedchamber consist of the Mistress of the Robes, the Ladies of the Bedchamber, and the Women of the Bedchamber. These, naturally, are greatly coveted positions, bringing the holders into close relationship with the Sovereign. Peel insisted on disposing of these posts if he formed a Government and the Queen refused point-blank to allow him to do anything of the kind. Melbourne remained chuckling quietly in the background, and Peel, in a bad temper, refused to form a Government. Consequently Melbourne emerged from the background and formed a Government instead, in which, quite naturally, there was no place for Mary Anne's affianced husband, a staunch follower, for the time at any rate, of Sir Robert Peel.

It must have comforted Mary Anne, who herself once received a terrible letter from Disraeli, to read one almost equally terrible from his pen addressed to the Queen, written over the signature of "Laelius" and published in *The Times*. In this he took the part of Peel, and pointed out to the Queen the fatal error of retaining about her ladies whose political opinions differed from those of the Government of the day.

> "Madam" (he wrote), "it cannot be. You are a queen; but you are a human being and a woman. The irrepressible sigh will burst forth some day, and you will meet a glance more interesting because there is a captivating struggle to suppress its sympathy. Wearied with public cares, crossed, as necessarily you must sometimes be, the peevish exclamation will have its way, and you yourself will be startled at its ready echo. The line once passed progress is quick: fascinating sympathy, long suppressed indignation, promised succour; the tear, the tattle, the innuendo, the direct falsehood; in a moment they will convince you you are a victim, and that they have heroes in wait to rescue their sovereign. Then come the Palace conspiracy and the backstairs intrigue. You will find yourself with the rapidity of enchantment the centre and the puppet of a camarilla, and Victoria, in the eyes of that Europe which once bowed to her, and in the hearts of those Englishmen who once yielded to her their devotion, will be reduced to the level of Madrid and Lisbon."

Mary Anne read it with awe, but it sounds strange to modern subjects unaccustomed to seeing the Sovereign apostrophised anonymously in the public press. Did Queen Victoria read it, and if so did she ever associate "Laelius" with the Mr. Disraeli

who when in office wrote her such amusing and altogether individual accounts of the proceedings in Parliament, who once assured her in a letter that she was not only his Sovereign, but the Sovereign of his heart? And did Disraeli himself in later years when consulted, though not in office, by the Queen, recall as he wrote his tactful reply, the stern words of "Laelius"?

Still, if her Dizzy seemed as far off as ever from obtaining office, at least Mary Anne could point with pride to the fact that *Alarcos*, the poetic tragedy written in the first flush of his love for her, continued to attract notice from cultured and influential readers even if not from the wretched scribblers of critics. He dined with the Duke of Buckingham, and *Alarcos* formed a topic of conversation at the ducal dinner-table. Now at last Ben knew something of dukes.

Moreover Disraeli made one of the best of his early speeches at the end of the session, and that brought *Alarcos* into prominence once more. He spoke against Lord John Russell's plan for a central Education Board, to have the spending of £30,000 a year. It sounds a mere trifle in these days of colossal expenditure on education, but many opposed the scheme, including Gladstone and Disraeli. The latter seems to have indulged in a certain amount of hair-splitting, for he advocated national education, but it did not follow that he approved of State education.

Disraeli, a successful writer who might be expected to desire the largest possible reading public, condemned State education on the ground that "it had been discovered that the best way to ensure implicit obedience was to commence tyranny in the nursery." Modern dictators have made the most of this discovery. He allowed himself a glance at the conditions he found in an England devoid of State education and saw that they were good:

> "No; other principles had actuated the men of former days, and let them look abroad on England and witness the result. Where would they find a country more elevated in the social scale? where a people more distinguished for all that was excellent in the human character? The time would come, if they persisted in their present course, when they would find that they had revolutionised the English character; and when that was effected, then they could no longer expect English achievements."

After this glowing pronouncement in favour of illiteracy "Canterbury was very warm" at the Carlton, and Lords Lincoln

and Ashley offered congratulations. More significant still Colburn, the ever faithful publisher, on the strength of the speech, advertised *Alarcos* as "Mr. Disraeli's Tragedy." Mary Anne might well feel proud, seeing that she inspired *Alarcos*, and there was more to follow. A noble friend who invited them to pass the autumn in Ireland, for they were to be married in the summer, raved about *Alarcos*, and knew much of it by heart.

Unfortunately Macready, the great actor, declined to risk the production of the tragedy. He found it too strange and terrible.

There was much more before Mary Anne married. Disraeli dined with the Londonderrys in a beautiful cottage with a conservatory more than sixty feet long. There he met many friends. Subsequently he spoke in the House and analysed all the evidence of the constabulary report, quoting all the pages and names without any document. These feats of memory always impress the House although they are merely mechanical. Still, Mary Anne loved his mechanical triumph at the end of the session.

After that there occurred for Mary Anne's delectation the distinction of a four hours' interview with Palmerston, followed by a letter from that great man thanking his interviewer for his patience, candour, and fairness. Could Mary Anne's fiancé have deserved a more distinguished tribute?

The session came at last to its appointed end. Parliament was prorogued on August 27th, 1839. On August 28th, Mary Anne and Disraeli were married at St. George's, Hanover Square.

Her wedding dress, according to the frocks in the Victoria and Albert Museum, may well have had a normal waist and leg of mutton sleeves. As for what was going on at that period, an advertisement appeared in *The Times* offering for ten shillings a week furnished apartments twelve minutes' walk from the Bank with buses passing at every five minutes to all parts. The drawing-room floor of two rooms had every convenience, water and water-closet being on the same floor. The proprietor, or proprietress, would serve breakfast if required, and the address was at 21 Pleasant Row, Pentonville.

The little Queen read her speech proroguing Parliament. She rejoiced that a definitive treaty between Holland and Belgium, negotiated by the medium of the Five Powers, had settled the differences between those two countries. "It is with satisfaction," she said, "that I have given my consent to a reduction of the postage duties."

The apartments of the Duchess of Kent at Kensington Palace were robbed at the close of the previous week of plate and wearing apparel by two sweeps, who escaped, but were afterwards stopped by the police. Her Royal Highness, with Royal tact, refused to prosecute.

The Baron Münchausen had audience of the Queen at Buckingham Palace, introduced by Lord Palmerston, Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Messrs. Keith, Prowse & Co., offered Æolian harps at 48 Cheapside for twelve shillings in white wood, or, painted plain green, for sixteen shillings.

From a psychological point of view the marriage of Mary Anne with Disraeli could hardly have failed to be successful. She was born in November and he in December, and the characteristics of people born in these months have been charted scientifically. Every phase of her character was complementary to every phase of his. Even the date of their wedding suggested a happy augury.

For people born in November or December the number three is favourable. According to numerology (the science of numbers) the date of their wedding, August 28th, 1839, adds up to three, thus:

$$\begin{aligned} & 28+8+1839 \\ =\ & 10+8+\ 21 \\ =\ & 1+8+\ 3 \\ =\ & 12 \\ =\ & 3 \end{aligned}$$

(In numerology the digits composing dates are added together).

Assessing Mary Anne's character according to the month of her birth, people born in November are highly magnetic and have great influence for good or evil. Their likes and dislikes are very marked and they never let go their hold on those they love. They do not talk when it is necessary to be discreet and have the power to keep their own counsel and await the favourable opportunity.

November women are intensely affectionate, excellent housekeepers and alert as to the welfare of their families. They have great determination and never lose their heads in a crisis. Above all they possess supreme courage and endurance and exert great influence over others. Their health is excellent, and capable of withstanding a great strain. Platonic friendship makes no

appeal to them because of their possessive instinct, and so they excel as wives. Once married their husbands' welfare is their main preoccupation, and they have a great capacity for love.

This is a picture of the November woman's characteristics and it represents also an excellent thumbnail character sketch of Mary Anne.

Disraeli was born in December. Theoretically he should have married a woman born in August, April, or March, but the character of a November woman dovetails so remarkably with his that the risk was well worth while.

Men born in December have strong intuition and remarkable inspiration, and they love argument of a philosophical or political nature. They think and act quickly and are miserable when without occupation. They can see both sides of a question and excel in diplomacy, make sudden decisions and amazing deductions, and have a gift of accurate prophecy. They are proud and dignified and succeed better as generals than as private soldiers. They love pomp and circumstance.

They are born with excellent constitutions and boundless vitality, but their nervous systems are easily overstressed. They enjoy a large circle of friends and make friends easily, and are optimistic and ambitious. As a rule they marry, but marriage is not their main object in life. In childhood their disposition is unsettled and wandering. The most fortunate periods in their lives are from twenty-eight to thirty-five, and forty-two to forty-nine years of age. They generally achieve their greatest success between their thirty-sixth and sixty-third years.

Their characters on the whole show contradictions; they are adventurous and at the same time highly sensitive.

Anyone reading these two delineations cannot fail to perceive that, for Disraeli, Mary Anne was an ideal wife. Her affectionate nature, courage and endurance, and quality of the good housekeeper enabled her to cope successfully with Disraeli's periodically overstrained nerves, sensitiveness, and fits of depression. Her passion for her husband's welfare marked her as the ideal wife for an overworked politician and statesman. Her possessive instinct made her his faithful ally and supporter, and her great capacity for love comforted him at all times.

It is interesting to observe how exactly Disraeli's characteristics accord with those to be expected in the December born.

He entered upon his marriage with complete confidence and the happiest anticipation; with him it was a case of:

" Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

He did not pretend that his was a marriage of passion, but he vowed it was one of affection, and deliberate choice. Mary Anne united in herself all the qualities he desired in a wife and he looked forward to his wedding day as "that epoch in my life which will seal my career." He told Mary Anne that he would always have her quick and accurate sense to guide him, coining one of those penetrating and inspired phrases which sparkle like jewels in his speeches and writings. No woman ever displayed a quicker and more accurate sense in the interest of the man she loved than Mary Anne.

Having no shining gift of words like her husband, her comment on her wedding day showed a very touching simplicity and sincerity. It ran: "Gloves 2s. 6d. In hand £300. Married 28: 8: 1839. Dear Dizzy became my husband." Throughout the remainder of her life until she died, still gallant and still faithful, her pride and her glory could be expressed in those last five words: "Dear Dizzy became my husband."

Not the least of Disraeli's claims to fame is that he knew her worth and never tired of telling her how much he appreciated her. She had not a great brain, but she was a great woman. From August 28th, 1839, onward, she brought peace and order into her husband's life, a feat he was quite incapable of achieving for himself because, as Clay remarked in Cairo, he ought never to travel, either through the world or through life, without a nurse. Her house in Grosvenor Gate provided him with a refuge and a background, and her income gave him a breathing space when necessary in which to appease his creditors.

One day he was to pay it all back, fulfil her ambition for him by becoming Prime Minister, persuade Queen Victoria to create her a peeress in her own right, and make her the châtelaine of the manor of Hughenden in their beloved Buckinghamshire. Those who allege that Disraeli lived on Mary Anne do him and her a grave injustice. Mary Anne could never have admired and loved a man who could bring himself to live on her, and Disraeli could never have lived on any woman. Pride alone would have prevented him.

Mary Anne joyfully provided him with peace of mind and freedom in which to fulfil his destiny, and that destiny fulfilled, he repaid her by every means in his power, knowing quite well that no peerage and no pearls could ever match the devotion of a Mary Anne.

In the same spirit of affection and admiration which inspired him to write to her years afterwards: "It is all done, and you are the Lady of Hughenden," he set off with her on their honeymoon.

It began in the respectable but unexciting surroundings of Tunbridge Wells. Romance and spas seemed inseparable in Mary Anne's life; she had met Wyndham Lewis at Clifton where there was the Spa of Hotwells, and now she honeymooned with Disraeli at Tunbridge Wells. The weather was dreadful, for it never stopped raining, and so they remained in their rooms for the most part. They did indeed venture out in order to visit a noble lord resident in those parts, driving happily through the deluge, and they only went on the Pantiles once. At Tunbridge Wells they hardly knew anyone or cared to know anyone. The Tunbridge Wells of 1839 sounds remarkably like the Tunbridge Wells of to-day; respectable rather than riotous.

Mary Anne cared not at all, for she had her new frocks and the companionship of her dear Dizzy. Later they were going to the Continent where she would eat strange food and see strange sights, with Dizzy, the much-travelled, beside her to explain everything and tell her what to admire and what not to admire. He was thirty-five and she was forty-seven, but of course he knew a great deal more about the world than she did, and apart from that she did not look anything like forty-seven. That marvellous complexion which is the birthright of West-country girls kept its rose petal texture, and her tip-tilted nose displayed a charming impertinence. Also dear Dizzy disposed of an immense gravity of manner on occasion and she could never bring herself to be very grave, except over housekeeping and practical matters of that kind, because life always seemed to her such fun

In due time they left Tunbridge Wells, and the rain, and their comfortable rooms, and Mary Anne found herself travelling on the Continent, staying with her important young husband at Baden-Baden. Like a good Englishwoman she refused to be impressed and declared that the place was not much better than Cheltenham, a terrible insult to Cheltenham supposing Cheltenham ever knew. They decided not to stay very long at Baden-Baden, and continued to Stuttgart, of which Disraeli wrote in favourable terms to Sarah at Bradenham.

Mary Anne was happy, but it must have proved a singularly placid honeymoon. As always, when on his travels, Disraeli kept up a voluminous correspondence with Sarah in his best guide book manner. Mary Anne loved the festivities at Stuttgart, where the King sat in a pavilion in a field and gave away

the prizes at the agricultural show. Disraeli was reading Hallam and arguing with Sarah, or rather at Sarah, about him. Still, Mary Anne liked, or said she liked, silent melancholy men, though it is rather a forlorn business for a man to read grave literary works on his honeymoon, but there were the Queen in a blue carriage with scarlet-liveried servants, and the King on a prancing horse to look at. Besides, she had enjoyed the wonderful journey through the Black Forest.

They went on to Munich, which kindly provided her with the spectacle of another king. Munich at the time showed itself distinctly arty, and her Dizzy raved over the statues, but art never impressed Mary Anne to any great extent. Dizzy said no one had done so much for the arts, since Pericles, as the King of Bavaria, a statement that must have mystified his wife, who could never even remember whether the Greeks or Romans came first. Her Dizzy still travelled in that frame of mind which led him on his earlier wanderings to describe the last picture or the latest city as the most wonderful in the world, pausing only in his panegyrics to tell Sarah that the Danube was but an uncouth stream. That was in Paris where Bulwer called on them.

Did Mary Anne's memory, as she greeted him, flit back to the soirée at Bulwer's house in Hertford Street where Rosina introduced Dizzy? That was seven years ago when Mary Anne was only forty. A great deal had occurred since then: death and grief and love-making and marriage. She considered Bulwer with a thoughtful eye; *his* marriage had not turned out a very great success, but then who could put up for ever with Rosina's affectations? Mary Anne promised herself that her own marriage should prove very different from Rosina's, because Mary Anne liked and understood men whereas Rosina seemed to prefer dogs.

In Paris Mary Anne became very gay. For one thing she bought frocks, and for another Dizzy said she looked exactly like Madame de Pompadour, who ruled the fashions of the moment. That was exactly the kind of charming compliment he paid her so gladly and gracefully, and no harm could arise from looking like Madame de Pompadour, as long as one maintained one's own standards of behaviour.

People gave parties for her and invited her everywhere, and the shops fascinated her. Her health became even more radiant than usual; the world never saw a happier bride. Dizzy fell a victim to certain preoccupations, for alarming news arrived of

Isaac's health; the Duke of Wellington also was ill, and the illness of the greatest man in England could not but affect the political situation.

Even a preoccupied husband failed to destroy for her the thrill of Paris. Presently she would return with him to the house in Grosvenor Gate, and begin to think of dinner parties and receptions and the necessity of finding an eye-specialist whom Isaac, whose sight was failing, could consult; but all that lay in the future. Just now she was honeymooning in Paris, the city of honeymoons, and these golden, flying hours would never return.

Mary Anne's marriage was going to be a success because she brought to the business of marriage, and marriage after all is a business not a sentimental dream, the whole force of her practical nature. She despised illusions and had the courage to face facts. In order to face facts a person must first discover them, and Mary Anne set down on paper a very penetrating analysis of Disraeli's character and hers in parallel columns thus:

Dizzy	Mary Anne
Very calm.	Very effervescent.
Manners grave and almost sad.	Gay and happy-looking when speaking.
Never irritable.	Very irritable.
Bad-humoured.	Good-humoured.
Warm in love, but cold in friendship.	Cold in love, but warm in friendship.
Very patient.	No patience.
Very studious.	Very idle.
Very generous.	Only generous to those she loves.
Often says what he does not think.	Never says anything she does not think.
It is impossible to find out who he likes or dislikes from his manner. He does not show his feelings.	Her manner is quite different, and to those she likes she shows her feelings.
No vanity.	Much vanity.
Conceited.	No conceit.
No self love.	Much self love.
He is seldom amused.	Everything amuses her.
He is a genius.	She is a dunce.
He is to be depended on to a certain degree.	She is not to be depended on.
His whole soul is devoted to politics and ambition.	She has no ambition and hates politics.

This analysis reveals Mary Anne most clearly, and proves that she thoroughly understood her husband. In it she seems to do herself less than justice, because she calls herself a dunce, and no dunce could draw a nice distinction between conceit and vanity. Also she libels herself by saying she is not to be depended on, since Disraeli depended on her for domestic happiness over a period of thirty years, and she never failed him.

The sketch of herself is full of delightful touches. How easily anyone looking at her portrait can believe that everything amused her, that she had much vanity in the charming sense of the word, and that she was gay and happy looking when speaking. She came of a race of women who are fascinating to take out, because they always enjoy themselves, for everything amuses them, and so by being happy themselves they make others happy.

The final statement about herself, that she had no ambition and hated politics, appears to need qualifying. She may have had no personal ambition, but her ambition for Disraeli was boundless. As for the alleged hatred of politics, few women ever exceeded her skill in electioneering, and she showed herself a shrewd judge of political personalities.

Her candour about Disraeli equalled that which she brought to her judgment of herself. She loved him and admired him, but she could admit that he was bad-humoured and conceited. These two statements, written down in cold blood, dispose of the theory held by some writers that she sat throughout her married life at her husband's feet and gazed up at him in petrified admiration. Besides, she laid claim to much self-love, and this is not an attitude compatible with self-love. That her statements about Disraeli were genuine and the result of observation is not arguable because we have her word for it that she never said anything she did not think.

Long ago D'Orsay had written to Disraeli: "If you meet with a widow, then marry!" Herein the fine flower of the dandies displayed almost uncanny wisdom, culled possibly from his association with Lady Blessington, also a widow. It is unlikely that Disraeli would have lived happily with a woman who lacked previous experience of marriage; he could not have endured all the emotional asperities which arise when an idealistic bride finds that the realities of living with a man, however attractive she might have thought him, do not by any means accord with her anticipations.

Mary Anne, with twenty-three years of marriage to Wyndham

Lewis behind her, had ceased to look upon the married state as an emotional fairyland. She saw clearly her dear Dizzy's faults as well as his virtues, just as she saw her own faults. The future stretched before them bright with promise because, although she could declare that he was bad-humoured and conceited, he still remained her dear Dizzy.

They returned to London and the house in Grosvenor Gate with the blessing of Paris and their honeymoon still upon them. A note of sadness sounded at their home-coming because of Isaac Disraeli's failing sight. They had both been deeply distressed in Paris at Sarah's news of her father, but Disraeli imagined that the condition of his eyes might be accounted for by long hours spent over his books and lack of fresh air and exercise. Mary Anne had become at her first meeting with Isaac his very great friend, and he returned her affection. He was a quiet, gentle old man who had in some mysterious fashion sired a remarkable and wayward genius, whom he did not understand, to whom frequently he devoted many anxious thoughts.

Mary Anne he understood very well. She was kind and gay and laughing, and her presence at Bradenham spread like sunshine in that uneventful house. Thus he could be persuaded to make the journey to Grosvenor Gate in order to see a specialist, who considered that with proper treatment Isaac should make a good recovery. Unfortunately the specialist's diagnosis proved to be inaccurate, and Isaac became totally blind.

After the honeymoon a certain reaction set in. Mary Anne was busy reorganising her household to meet the new conditions of life, nothing stirred in the world of politics, and Disraeli gave way to one of his periodical fits of depression. They dined with the Rothschilds, and he complained there was not a Christian name among those present, and commended Mary Anne for her imperturbable cheerfulness in the circumstances. He longed for Bradenham whither his thoughts turned instinctively whenever the black mood descended upon him.

Mary Anne, who knew that the mood would pass, continued imperturbably cheerful. Her mind was occupied with the future, for the Whig Government could not possibly last much longer, and with the Tories in power who knew what distinction might fall to her dear Dizzy?

This preoccupation on the part of Mary Anne with the political future may need a certain amount of explaining to a generation which has ceased to make a study of politics and takes its political creed ready-made from the particular news-

paper read in the family. There is a passage in *Wives of the Prime Ministers*, by Elizabeth Lee, which explains the difference in political outlook between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries. She writes:

> "Politics and Society were closely bound together in the nineteenth century, especially during the earlier part of it; it was not only at the dinner tables and in the drawing-rooms of Ministers that political topics held the lion's share of the conversation. Public life was less of a trade or profession than it has since become, and the interest of the general family circle in the fate of a Bill or in the doings of the House, was strong and intense. . . . A looker on can see more of the game than one actively engaged in it, and a statesman's wife in the Victorian age was sufficiently removed from the excitement of the arena to be able to bring calm and reasoned judgment to bear on the issues involved."

Modern cinema-going young people are apt to use the adjective "Victorian" in a contemptuous sense merely because they have never taken the trouble to read the history of the Victorian period. It would be difficult to find nowadays three women so influential in the affairs of the nation as Lady Palmerston, Lady John Russell, and Lady Peel, all three beautiful women devoted to their husbands.

Many important decisions were arrived at informally. For instance, when Lord John Russell was courting Lady Fanny Elliot, the second daughter of the second Earl of Minto, he went down a great deal to Lord Minto's house at Putney, the garden of which in those days was infested by nightingales. After dinner Lord John, Lord Minto, and Lord Palmerston would hold informal Cabinet meetings and settle the affairs of the nation between themselves in a more spacious and appealing atmosphere than that of their ministerial offices. The middle class had only recently begun to make itself felt politically, and the working class scarcely at all. The Russells, the Cecils, the Stanleys and other great families ruled almost by divine right as though they had been kings. The names in a Cabinet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century read like an extract from a peerage.

Thus it became essential that, if her Dizzy's career was to be crowned with success, Mary Anne must emulate the Lady Peels and the Lady Palmerstons and play her part behind the political scenes.

The Whig Government was dying and Melbourne approached the end of his career as Prime Minister. The only alternative to the Whigs must be a Tory ministry, but who would lead it?

Certainly not the Duke of Wellington. Already he had advised the Queen on one occasion to send for Peel, whereupon Peel committed his unpardonable blunder respecting the Bedchamber appointments. The Duke no longer wished for power; he had become almost a legendary figure and had reached his seventieth year, though he was to survive until the age of eighty-three and be drawn to his last resting-place on one of the most fantastic funeral cars ever devised by man.

Thus inevitably the Queen would send for Peel once more, and he would not give rise to a second Bedchamber Question. With Peel in power Dizzy could feel practically certain of office, Mary Anne thought. He was the most brilliant orator in the Tory Party, and had contested election after election until brought in for Maidstone by Wyndham.

Moreover, he enjoyed the interest and good wishes of Peel. During that tragic maiden speech of Dizzy's, which seemed at the time like a disaster of the first magnitude, Peel had cheered him pointedly in the teeth of the howling followers of O'Connell. Afterwards Peel had said to Lord Chandos in regard to the speech: "Some of my Party were disappointed and talk of failure. I say *just the reverse*." Peel had invited Dizzy to a House of Commons dinner at the Carlton at the opening of his first session. Mary Anne's eyes sparkled with anticipation as she thought: "How can Sir Robert form a Government without my Dizzy?"

Unfortunately there was what Disraeli called a most capital speech on Chartism, delivered during the month preceding his marriage.

Disraeli had begun his political life as a Radical and still retained a deep sympathy for the people. In his election address at Maidstone, which won the praise of Wyndham Lewis, he had referred to the Poor Law Amendment Act passed in 1834 by the Whigs as "that odious Bill," and said that the Bill "bears fearful tidings for the poor." Thus he could appreciate the attitude of the Chartists, who demanded annual parliaments, manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, payment of members, and abolition of the property qualification for a seat in the House of Commons.

The industrial revolution had enriched manufacturers and degraded their workpeople, who lived in a state of abject misery. The Reform Act of 1832 offered an instalment of electoral

LADY BLESSINGTON, THE GREAT FRIEND OF DISRAELI AND D'ORSAY
She had great influence in politics and was a kind, generous and sympathetic woman.

reform, but made very little difference to the sweated workers in the factories. The manufacturers merely looked upon the workers as so much factory fodder.

Bad harvests, which ruined the agricultural labourer, began in 1837, followed by bad trade, which ruined the factory worker. Thereupon the working classes inscribed their five points in The People's Charter and held a national convention of Chartis delegates during the parliamentary session of 1839. The convention arranged for a petition on behalf of the Charter and a million and a half people signed it. The petition was conveyed to the House of Commons, and the House rejected it.

Disraeli made his "capital speech" in the debate on the petition. He said they might reject the Chartists' remedy, but at the same time they ought to try and cure the disease. He held it to be intimately connected with the new Poor Law. He admitted that the opposition—his own Party—were partly responsible for the new Poor Law, but he deplored it. The Tory Party would yet regret their consent to such a bill.

This attitude could not have pleased Peel, the Leader of the Tory Party, to any great extent, particularly when Disraeli continued that, however much he disapproved of the Charter, he sympathised with the Chartists.

Peel really did not know what to think.

In *Sybil*, one of Disraeli's novels, Charles Egremont made a similar speech, and this passage from the novel suggests how greatly Disraeli mystified the political world. Mr. Egremont may be assumed to symbolise Disraeli:

> "It was a very remarkable speech of Egremont," said the grey-haired gentleman. "I wonder what he wants?"
>
> "I think he must be going to turn Radical," said the Warwickshire peer.
>
> "Why, the whole speech was against Radicalism," said Mr. Egerton.
>
> "Ah, then he is going to turn Whig, I suppose."
>
> "He is an ultra anti-Whig," said Egerton.
>
> "Then what the deuce is he?" said Mr. Berners.
>
> "Not a Conservative certainly, for Lady St. Julians does nothing but abuse him."
>
> "I suppose he is crochety," suggested the Warwickshire noble.
>
> "That speech of Egremont was the most really democratic speech that I ever read," said the grey-haired gentleman.

"What does he mean by obtaining the results of the Charter without the intervention of its machinery?" inquired Lord Loraine, a mild, middle-aged, lounging, languid man, who passed his life in crossing from Brooks' to Boodle's, and from Boodle's to Brooks', and testing the comparative intelligence of these two celebrated bodies. . . .

"I took him to mean—indeed, it was the gist of the speech—that, if you wished for a time to retain your political power, you could only effect your purpose by securing for the people greater social felicity."

"Well, that is sheer Radicalism," said the Warwickshire peer. "Pretending that the people can be better off than they are is Radicalism, and nothing else."

We may take it that Disraeli's general attitude to social questions was that the people should attain greater social felicity. This could not make him intensely popular with the bulk of his Party, although then, as now, a section of the Tories, or Conservatives, showed themselves more Radical, or Socialist as it would be called to-day, than the Radicals, or Socialists, themselves.

He spoke again in January, 1840, on the Chartist question, and said, among other things:

"The time will come when Chartists will discover that in a country so aristocratic as England even treason, to be successful, must be patrician. They will discover that great truth, and when they find some desperate noble to lead them they may, perhaps, achieve greater results. Where Wat Tyler failed, Henry Bolingbroke changed a dynasty, and although Jack Straw was hanged a Lord John Straw may become a Secretary of State."

This was not very polite to Lord John Russell, the Home Secretary, who wished to advance money to the Birmingham Corporation that they might provide a police force, owing to a Chartist riot.

This extremely Radical attitude on Disraeli's part could not have commended itself greatly to Peel and leading members of his Party. Consequently Mary Anne's anticipation of office for her Dizzy on the collapse of the Whig Government and the return of Peel and the Tories to power should not have shown itself too optimistic. Party discipline at the period was nothing like so rigid as it is now, and Disraeli in addition to his speech had gaily voted in a minority of three against Lord John Russell's

Birmingham police scheme. This was trailing his coat to say the least of it.

In spite of all that, to Mary Anne's intense delight Peel invited him early in 1840 to a meeting of the leaders of the opposition. There were sixteen present and all had held office except Disraeli. On the same day he spoke against Peel and voted against him also. This looked very much like tempting Providence.

Mary Anne's pre-eminent common sense must have caused her misgivings, but she had no control in such matters, and possessed sufficient wisdom not to criticise her Dizzy's conduct in the House. Besides, he was ingratiating himself in other ways. Peel had congratulated him on his marriage. January 18th saw him give his first men's dinner party, including Lord Lyndhurst, D'Orsay, and Lytton Bulwer. Early in February he asked sixty M.P.s to dinner and forty accepted. It was all very flattering and satisfactory.

Peel, Mary Anne felt, when eventually the Queen sent for him, would not let a few rash excursions from the Party fold count against her Dizzy. He might indeed be wayward, but no one could deny him genius. Besides, where on either side of the House could be found a more remarkable orator? Nor did he display the dilettante languors of a Melbourne. He was an indefatigable worker and a House of Commons' man to the backbone. Long since, that fastidious assembly had forgiven him, not only his oddities of voice, manner, and dress, but a persistent brilliance of phrase and metaphor of which the average honest Englishman perpetually fights shy.

She decided that inevitably a place must be found for Dizzy in a new Government. She longed for this reward of his services because she understood his temperament so well. In the old days he had languished under a sense of defeat until Wyndham brought him in for Maidstone. Denied office with his Party in power, doubtless the situation would repeat itself. In this respect he showed himself the typical December-born person, who longs for action and is restless when the chance to be active is denied him.

Besides, Dizzy would make such a splendid Under Secretary or even Cabinet Minister. He had the flair for tradition, the sense of dignity and order, common to December people, which would permit him to adorn even Cabinet rank.

That year (1840) the little Queen married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg, and on February the 17th the Members of the

House of Commons went to Buckingham Palace to congratulate the young couple. Mary Anne thought her Dizzy made a wonderful appearance in Court dress, an opinion shared by others. The Queen was looking well, and the Prince, in uniform, very handsome.

Spring saw the Disraelis at Brighton, eating many shrimps, and enjoying the fine weather. In June they were entertaining lavishly—the Lyndhursts with other peers and the Dowager Duchess of Richmond dined with them. Mary Anne delighted in the success of the Party, and a few nights later found herself invited in return to a grand supper at Lady Lyndhurst's. Melbourne's ministry continued in office, and as Disraeli once put it, "Their feebleness is of so vigorous a character that I doubt not they will still totter on."

In September they stayed with the Maxses, in a paradise of flowers. At a dinner party during November, at No. 1 Grosvenor Gate, with the inevitable Lyndhursts among the guests, Mary Anne served a perfect Spanish pudding. This was from a Bradenham recipe, and Lyndhurst remembered having eaten Spanish pudding there. One of the guests begged for the recipe of Spanish pudding, but Mary Anne refused it. A notable pudding is a social asset, and like a wise hostess she wished hers to be the only table in London at which one might meet the perfect Spanish pudding.

They spent Christmas at Deepdene, among a distinguished collection of guests. Mary Anne was lucky, for her host gave her as a Christmas present two Dresden china figures, a gentleman in cocked hat and full dress, and a lady dressed in lace.

In May, 1841, Melbourne's Government failed to totter any further. It was defeated on the question of a reduction in the sugar duty, by thirty-six votes. Even at that they clung to office, but Peel moved a vote of want of confidence, which was carried. Thereupon the Ministry asked for a dissolution of Parliament, and the Queen consented.

Disraeli and his constituents at Maidstone were no longer on good terms, but he had been asked to stand for Shrewsbury, and thither accordingly Mary Anne and he departed to fling themselves into the fray of an election. Seldom can there have occurred a more bitter contest, but the charm and tact of Mary Anne turned the scale in her Dizzy's favour. She was no raw hand at canvassing, and in the end the electors of Shrewsbury took her so warmly to their hearts that she became a legend in the town.

Her husband needed all her persuasiveness, because the opposition fished in the most troubled waters they could find, in order to blacken his character in the eyes of the electors. They even went to the length of publishing an anonymous poster declaring that he wished for election so as to avoid bankruptcy or imprisonment for debt, and gave a list of alleged judgments against him to the extent of £22,000.

Disraeli told the electors that the statement was untrue, and that he had paid in full every item on the list, and talked about his "ample independence." Actually he was very hard up, and once a writ served in his absence upset Mary Anne very much, and caused great scenes to take place at Grosvenor Gate. Among other things he had borrowed money at forty per cent in order to back a bill of D'Orsay's, and solvency is hard to achieve through transactions of this nature. It is doubtful whether Mary Anne, any more than his father, ever knew the extent to which he was involved with creditors.

However, Mary Anne smiled him through the Shrewsbury election, and he was capable of smiling himself through his financial troubles.

It is essential, unfortunately, to attempt now to understand the Corn Laws, because they had a certain effect on the lives of Mary Anne and Disraeli. Mr. Buckle has written of the Corn Laws:

> "The Corn Laws were so long the gage of party battle, and they raise issues with regard to which party feeling is still so vehement, that it is by no means easy to thread a way through the controversial tangle in which they are involved. Anyone who tries will find himself at once in a bewildering atmosphere of legend and exaggeration, of half-truths masquerading as indefeasible principles, and rival theories appropriating such facts as fit them, while ignoring the rest. . . . He will learn at all events not to trust the confident dogmatism of either school of partisans, and perhaps to suspect that the question of high tariff or low in its strictly economic bearing is a good deal less important than either believes . . ."

The Corn Laws, like the helmet of Navarre, were the oriflamme to-day of various political Parties, but if we dig up the facts we shall see that from a practical point of view the Corn Laws had little bearing on the economic situation of the average English cottager.

As young people must be reminded, England to-day does not grow enough food for her population, and imports corn, which has to be paid for with exports, because "money" in itself has no value, being only a convenient symbol for real wealth expressed in terms of what people must have, such as food, clothes, light, shelter, and so on.

Till nearly the end of the eighteenth century England not only grew enough food for her own people, but exported corn. Moreover, producers enjoyed a bounty on export, that is they were subsidised for exporting. Later imports became essential from time to time, but trade was free. When the French Revolution broke out England had ceased to grow enough corn for her population, and in 1791, to stimulate home production, an import duty was imposed to keep out foreign corn when the price of English corn fell to a given level. At this time, owing to the European situation, both English and foreign supplies were so short that in 1812 wheat fetched 155s. a quarter.

When peace was signed with France in 1815 English agriculture languished, and so the Corn Law of 1815 was passed forbidding the import of wheat until the price of wheat in England reached 80s. a quarter. As a result home production increased and the price of wheat declined. In 1822 the price at which imports might take place was reduced to 70s. a quarter. In 1828, by a fresh Act of Parliament a varying scale of duties on foreign wheat replaced the 70s. standard.

By the time the clamour for the repeal of the Corn Laws reached its height they had become largely symbolic. They were merely a point of focus for the general unrest, because in 1840 the average duty on imported wheat was not more than 5s. 3d. a quarter. Even in a bad year the English farmer grew nearly 90 per cent of wheat consumed, and in 1835 wheat averaged rather under 40s. a quarter. Owing to a rise in price after 1837, when harvests became bad, Richard Cobden founded the Anti-Corn Law League.

Disraeli took up a middle position between Richard Cobden—described by Carlyle as "the inspired bagman with his calico millennium" because Cobden was an internationalist and anti-imperialist—and those in favour of protective duties. Disraeli's theory was: Reduce the farmer's burdens and the import duties which protect him in the same ratio and you will have cheap bread.

After the defeat of the Whigs in the election during which Mary Anne triumphed at Shrewsbury and her Dizzy was returned, Melbourne's ministry resigned only when defeated

on the Address. A majority of ninety against them convinced Melbourne that the end really had come at last. There was no alternative but for Queen Victoria to ask Peel to form a Government. The Duke of Wellington, that legendary figure, no longer desired office. The most he would consent to do was to remain the figure-head of the Tory Party and lead the House of Lords.

Peel went down to Windsor on August 30th, 1841, and kissed hands as Prime Minister. There began then a period of acute suspense and uncontrollable anxiety for Mary Anne. By all the laws of logic and probability Dizzy should be given office in the new Government. He had worked tirelessly for his Party, fought election after election, and in the two brief years of his parliamentary career become an outstanding figure in the eyes of friends and foes alike. Moreover, he had made powerful friends whose influence should prove decisive. Not only was he a brilliant orator, but he wielded a brilliant pen, and his political writings, under thinly veiled disguises, had made a deep effect on the public mind.

On a dozen occasions Peel had gone out of his way to mark the friendliness of his attitude, from that of Dizzy's dramatic maiden speech, when Peel had cheered solemnly and significantly, to that on which he offered his congratulations regarding their marriage. One could not suppose that all these marks of favour would go for nothing.

Peel continued grimly with his business of Cabinet making. Mary Anne's hopes rose when Lyndhurst, Dizzy's friend, who dined at their house, whose Lady has asked Mary Anne to a grand supper, was appointed Lord Chancellor. The other names followed: Graham, Home Secretary; Aberdeen, Foreign Secretary; Stanley, Secretary for the Colonies. They left her unmoved; Dizzy could hardly expect Cabinet rank at this early stage in his career. Then, sorrowfully, day after day, came news of minor offices being allotted to this man and that, but not a mention of Dizzy's name.

She watched the black fit of despair settle down on him. Once more, then, he told himself, he was a failure. All his life, it seemed, he would be doomed to make the greatest exertions, only to find victory snatched from him at the last moment. And yet he had trusted Peel. Could one trust nobody, or had those guerrilla tactics offended the great man mortally, and Disraeli's expressions of sympathy with the Chartists cost him a place in the Government?

Morbidly sensitive he seemed to feel all men's eyes upon him at the Carlton. One could not make telling speeches without arousing jealousy, and the congratulations he had received were, no doubt, the mere false geniality of those anxious to keep on good terms with a rising man. Now his enemies would all rejoice that the strange newcomer, with his exotic appearance and manner, who respected no one, had been taught his place.

It seemed as though that restless ambition of his would never be satisfied. Bitterly he told himself that men of outstanding ability were not wanted unless at the same time they happened to be landed gentry. The bitter gibe at Lord John Russell recurred to him: even treason to be successful must be patrician, let alone politics. Who could have staged a more flashing electoral campaign than he? In spite of vilifications by his opponents and the handicap of his debts he had only remained out of Parliament for five days. His marriage was achieved in spite of Mary Anne's occasional doubts, he disposed of a town house and a background, and now the miserable jealousies and intrigues of Party denied him the reward of office.

Peel kissed hands on a Monday, and by the following Saturday Mary Anne could bear the spectacle of her Dizzy's misery no longer. With all the courage and loyalty of a new bride she made for once in her life a direct incursion into politics. She took up her pen and wrote to Peel begging him not to break her Dizzy's heart. She was acquainted with Peel's family, and no false pride should prevent her from striking a blow for her husband's career and happiness.

First she asked Peel not to be angry with her and to pardon her intervention on the score of her anxiety. She dwelt on the importance to Disraeli of Peel's good offices. She pointed out that though Peel knew something of what Disraeli had done in the Party cause there was much that he had done of which Peel knew nothing, but it had all been done nevertheless for the honour of Peel.

She reminded him that Disraeli had never hesitated to make enemies among the opponents of Peel's Party, that Disraeli had fought four most expensive elections since 1834 and won seats from the Whigs in two of them. She went so far as to guarantee that one seat should always be at Peel's service.

Disraeli, she said, had given up literature for politics, and she begged Peel not to destroy all his hopes and make him feel that his sacrifices had been in vain.

Last, she told Peel what she herself had done for him, reminding him that £40,000 was spent at Maidstone through her influence alone. She begged Peel not to reply to her letter as she did not wish any one to know that she had written to him.

There, indeed, we see the true Mary Anne. For herself she would have scorned to beg, but she was not too proud to beg on behalf of her husband because she saw him completely crushed, she understood the intensity of his feelings, the strength of his ambition; and what was a woman's vanity compared to the undeserved sufferings of the truly great man she had married?

Next day Disraeli himself, in complete ignorance of Mary Anne's letter, wrote also to Peel. It must have cost him also a certain sacrifice of pride. Even if his plea succeeded, how different the result from being wafted to office in a cloud of glory by a grateful and admiring Prime Minister.

Disraeli began his letter with "Dear Sir Robert," and referred also to the four elections he had fought since 1834 and his great financial and intellectual efforts to support Peel's policy. He claimed also that he had had to face unprecedented hatred and malice in the political world "from the moment, at the instigation of a member of your Cabinet, I enrolled myself under your banner."

He had been able to face this hatred and malice in the belief that one day Peel would recognise publicly his respect for Disraeli's character and ability. Not to be so recognised overwhelmed him and he appealed to his Leader's heart, justice, and magnanimity to save him from an intolerable humiliation.

Unfortunately the intolerable humiliation was to continue, in spite of Mary Anne's pleading and Disraeli's passionate justification of his merits. Sir Robert wrote him what can only be described as a cold letter, beginning: "My dear Sir". He observed to begin with that no member of his Cabinet had ever been authorised to make the alleged communication. In short, he did not know the member of the Cabinet had spoken, or who he was, but had Sir Robert known the member of the Cabinet was going to speak to Disraeli in such terms, Sir Robert would have told him not to, because above all things Sir Robert liked a free hand in distributing offices.

Still, he would have given Mr. Disraeli office if he could, but many other supporters had had to be left out, a proceeding which hurt Sir Robert's feelings just as much as it hurt theirs.

He hoped all the disappointed would realise that there were not enough places to satisfy their quite legitimate aspirations,

he did not doubt their merits or deserts, and he would have felt proud to have them all as colleagues. He ended:

"Believe me, my dear sir,

"Very faithfully yours,

"ROBERT PEEL."

This called forth a reply from Disraeli. Nothing in his own letter suggested that any member of Peel's Cabinet had promised him office, and he could not understand how Peel could have put that interpretation on it. Disraeli concluded by remarking that the mere unfulfilment of a pledge, even if Peel himself had made it, would never have caused him to write a letter. Not to be appreciated might be a mortification: to be baulked of a promised reward was only a vulgar accident of life, to be borne without a murmur.

It might have comforted Mary Anne to know that Peel would have liked to give Disraeli office, but many difficulties stood in the way of such action. On the principle that a lady can do anything merely because she *is* a lady, and so bestows automatically on her actions ladylike qualities, a Melbourne or a Stanley might have included Disraeli in his Government without a second thought. Peel, the son of a wealthy cotton manufacturer, lacked the social prestige of a Melbourne or a Stanley, and Disraeli remained in the eyes of the majority a very odd person, with his florid waistcoats, his chains, and his affectations.

Peel had married the beautiful Julia Floyd, the daughter of General Sir John Floyd, Bt., K.B., a member of a distinguished military family, and the marriage was ideally happy. When Peel died, killed by a fall from his horse, Lord John Russell offered Lady Peel a peerage in her own right, but she declined it, saying that her only consolation would be to continue to bear the same unaltered honoured name. Disraeli had married a middle-aged widow, years older than himself, on account of her money it was said.

Peel received the conventional English education and took a double first at Oxford. Disraeli had been educated at various nameless schools and at the age of seventeen entered a solicitor's office.

Thus Peel, very naturally, found the defence of Disraeli's claims difficult. One could not, with safety to oneself, proceed too warmly on the matter. A son of the solid north carefully consolidating his position in the effete south must stand faintly aloof from a meretricious personality, such as Disraeli's appeared

n the opinion of many. Peel still belonged essentially to the niddle class, with its tenacious worship of "the right thing." Peel and her ladyship were essentially "right"; they had a beautiful house looking over the river, and a collection of respectable pictures. Some considered that Mary Anne's house n Grosvenor Gate lacked taste as to its furnishing and that she wore rather unsuitable clothes, though the latter shortcoming does not appear in her protraits. All this could not but affect Peel's judgment.

Peel was not entirely his own master any more than any other Prime Minister. Disraeli's fate appears to have been sealed when, on Peel's putting his name forward, Stanley said abruptly: "If he is taken in I will not remain myself." No Tory Prime Minister faced with a choice between Stanley and Disraeli could afford to choose Disraeli.

His choice having been forced on him, Peel did not escape a mild feeling of relief. Could one, after all, describe Disraeli and Mary Anne as anything more than a pair of adventurers, she adventuring on the strength of a fortune left her by her first husband in a love affair with a youngish self-confessed dandy, and he adventuring politically on the strength of her first husband's influence to begin with and afterwards on that of her money?

Really, despite the man's obvious gifts, it seemed hardly decent. Who would imagine Julia, with the tradition of all the Floyds behind her, writing a letter similar to Mrs. Disraeli's letter to him on his behalf, supposing the positions of himself and Disraeli had been reversed? As for her story that she wished no human being to know of it, obviously the whole thing must be a conspiracy between her and her husband. Otherwise the coincidence of her letter, written on the Saturday, and his written on the Sunday, became impossible to believe.

Now Gladstone was so different. How well Peel understood and sympathised with Gladstone, a product of Eton, who had taken, like Peel, a double-first at Oxford. What more satisfactory than to have Gladstone as Under-Secretary for the Board of Trade, an office Gladstone accepted with little enthusiasm, because he had a perpetual rendezvous with the Church of England, and the Board of Trade is more concerned with bales than bishops. The story goes that when Gladstone, after reconciling as best he might the Board of Trade with his religious principles, accepted, Peel took his hands and exclaimed: "God bless you!"

This choice of Gladstone rubbed salt into the wounded vanity of Mary Anne and Disraeli. The Gladstones and the Disraelis married in the same year, but Gladstone was Disraeli's junior and of course infinitely less gifted. How dull he had seemed at that dinner given by the Chancellor to Lord Abinger and the Barons of the Exchequer, six years previously, when they ate a white swan, very tender and stuffed with truffles. There seemed no consolation to be drawn from any circumstance, not even from the letter of the kind Sarah, who wrote from Bradenham to Mary Anne, commiserating with her and dear Dis' disappointment.

Mary Anne, with the wisdom of a loving woman, knew that there could be no consolation for her dear Dizzy except herself. They had been thrown to the wolves by the priggish, snobbish, ungrateful Peel, but at least they possessed one another and to-morrow is also a day. She knew Dizzy would become one day the greatest man in England. At present her task was to convince him of her faith and preserve his faith in himself. This indeed he never lacked, but in times of depression he began to doubt if ever the opportunity would arrive for him to justify that faith by good works.

She saw that nothing could be gained by remaining in London at the close of the autumn session and so she carried him off to Normandy. They took rooms in Caen, and the pure Normandy air enabled him to shake off his depression; Caen was old and appealed with its Norman churches, St. Etienne, La Trinité and St. Pierre, to one who came of an ancient race.

Above all she exerted herself to suggest patience. Dizzy's one instinct, when wounded, was to attack. She did not want him, at the opening of the new session in February, to attack Peel. That would merely give rise to accusations of jealousy and spite. He must resign himself for the time to functioning as a supporter of an administration while not in place himself, a being, as he was to write to her later on, with neither hope nor fear.

She persuaded him in the end because he supported Peel's Government for two sessions. On their return to England they were separated because the illness of her mother kept Mary Anne at Bradenham. It was almost worth being away from him in order to receive his dear letters, in which he wrote everything a loved woman loves most to hear; every detail of his life, as well as these phrases of the most touching and devoted affection.

"I will now give you my blessing as well as send you my love

deep and dear. The more we are separated the more I cling to you." "At breakfast I placed the bouquet of violets on my table . . .and fancied it was a very apt representative of yourself."

He had made a great speech attacking Palmerston, speaking for two hours and twenty minutes. Palmerston replied with care. Peel cheered. Disraeli wrote to Mary Anne: "On Thursday for certain I shall be with my beloved."

Mary Anne returned from Bradenham and life continued happily, for she distributed the charm of her personality throughout the house at Grosvenor Gate, and in the House of Commons her Dizzy sniffed the battle afar. Peel continued to tinker with the Corn Laws.

He also reimposed the Income Tax, originally levied in 1799, and abolished in 1816.

Unfortunately for Peel he began to lose the confidence both of Parliament and the country. Consequently Disraeli went down to Shrewsbury, taking Mary Anne with him, in order to comfort his constituents.

The gist of his argument was that you cannot have free trade unless the person you deal with is as liberal as yourself. There is a great deal of sense in this contention.

In the whole course of his speech he supported Sir Robert Peel. He said:

> "If I find the Government seceding really from their pledges and opinions—if I find them, for instance, throwing over that landed interest that brought them into power—my vote will be recorded against them. I do not come down to Shrewsbury to make a holiday speech and say this. I have said this at Westminster, sitting at the back of Sir Robert Peel, alone, and without flinching, and I say it again here.
>
> "I will never commit myself on this great question (the Corn Bill) to petty economical details; I will not pledge myself to miserable questions of 6d. in 7s. 6d. or 8s. of duties about corn; I do not care whether your corn sells for this sum or that, or whether it is under a sliding scale or a fixed duty; but what I want, and what I wish to secure, and what, as far as my energies go, I will secure, is the preponderance of the landed interest.
>
> "Gentlemen, when I talk of the preponderance of the landed interest, do not for a moment suppose that I mean merely the

preponderance of 'squires of high degree.' My thought wanders farther than a lordly tower or a baronial hall . . .

"I mean that estate of the poor which, in my opinion, has been already dangerously tampered with; I mean the great estate of the Church, which has before this time secured our liberty, and may, for aught I know, still secure our civilisation; I mean also by the landed interest that great judicial fabric, that great building up of our laws and manners, which is, in fact, the polity of the realm."

Could a more marvellous vote-catching speech be imagined? The landed interest, stretched to cover almost everyone who had ever walked nine yards across the soil of England, the Church, and the judicial fabric. In those days almost everyone still went to church, meaning by church a Church of England service, and as for the judicial fabric, all the best people were justices of the peace. The speech united the cotter and the capitalist, the village lout and the Lord of the Manor in one bond and unity to support Sir Robert Peel. It was a great deal for anyone to do to whom Peel had denied office.

Behind all this façade of oratory Mary Anne appeared delicious and smiling. The electors of Shrewsbury loved her, and she knew it, and the more they loved her the more they would cling to her dear Dizzy. They might doubt Peel, but as long as she smiled in support of him they would never doubt Dizzy.

Throughout his speech Disraeli insisted that Peel still supported protection. It would have been of no use to take any other view in the face of the agricultural, or landed, interest. Peel supported nothing of the sort.

This was Disraeli's last defence of Peel's Government.

Leaving politics on one side, their visit to Shrewsbury was very gay. They arrived at 10 p.m., missing a triumphal entrance. It seems queer nowadays, when cinema stars alone command respect, how seriously people took politics in the 1840's. After a dinner they went on to the Bachelors' Ball, and Mary Anne, looking splendid as well she might, seeing the admiration accorded to her dear Dizzy, wore white, with a dark wreath of velvet flowers twined with diamonds. No doubt they were Wyndham Lewis' diamonds, but who cares?

On the following day they went to the races and saw Retriever win the Tankerville. Retriever has long since been dust, but his name survives in honour of Mary Anne.

She sat in the gallery and received even more cheering than

her Dizzy. It is to the eternal honour of the inhabitants of Shrewsbury that they appreciated Mary Anne at her true value, and loved her. But then, of course, Shrewsbury veers towards the West, and Mary Anne was a West-country girl, with all the gracious ways and charm that distinguishes the West. For that reason, not to speak of a million others, the people of Shrewsbury took her to their hearts, and those hearts remained faithful to her. At the Bachelors' Ball she was the great lady of the evening, and led out to supper by the Lord Mayor. It is doubtful which was the more proud, Mary Anne on account of Dizzy, or the Lord Mayor on account of Mary Anne.

After Parliament was prorogued in 1842 he took her to France once more. They stayed in the rue de Rivoli with windows looking over the Tuileries gardens, and even in October it was warm enough to sit with the windows open, and the temperature 70 degrees in the shade.

They mixed, as usual, with all the best people, both French and English. They had a *cuisinière bourgeoise*, very pretty—heaven knows how in a hotel, for no one in a hotel sees the cook—and so she is worth recording. Mary Anne begged Sarah not to have any stays made till Mary Anne came home, because she had picked up valuable knowledge about stays. Why poor Sarah should worry about stays, seeing that her heart reposed in Meredith's grave at Cairo, is not explained, and we can only suppose that vanity is the last weakness which the female discards.

Madame Thiers received every evening, poor woman, and so Disraeli and Mary Anne paid their respects. Thiers showed Mary Anne the greatest respect and accompanied her to her carriage.

Beyond all that Disraeli received a communication from the Royal aide-de-camp that the King would receive him at St. Cloud. They talked frankly for two hours. As there was no Court of any kind poor Mary Anne could not be presented. The Court was in mourning. The literary geniuses of Paris inquired particularly about Isaac. Everyone there respected his writings.

They attended a party at the British Embassy and saw everyone worth seeing in the diplomatic world of Paris. She was very well indeed, and enjoying herself thoroughly. Who could wonder since, on her own confession, everything interested her, and here were a meeting of the Académie Française and a reception at Madame de Castellane's. Besides, every woman was pretty and every man a wit.

"In England," Disraeli wrote in *Coningsby*, *culbuté* by his reception at the hands of the King, "we too often alternate between a supercilious neglect of genius and a rhapsodical pursuit of quacks."

They saw the opening of the Chambers and heard the King's speech. The Odilon-Barrots asked them to dine, to meet people like Lamartine, Tocqueville, and Gustave de Beaumont. They encountered the Turkish Ambassador. Disraeli praised a dish he had eaten in Turkey, and the Ambassador's cook brought a replica of it as a gift to Mary Anne.

Mary Anne came home a little intoxicated with all this splendour. Nothing like it had occurred during her marriage to Wyndham Lewis. There had been a marvellous entertainment at the British Embassy with a thousand guests, and orange trees springing from the supper table. The French ladies, according to Dizzy, received their guests in a consummate manner. They united graceful repose and unaffected dignity with the most amiable regard for others. There was, said he, in every circle of Parisian society, a sincere homage to intellect.

Mary Anne didn't quite understand. She had never laid claim to intellect, she adored her Dizzy, he had been happy in Paris, and shown her off in the most flattering fashion. When they returned home she would continue to love him, and he would remain eternally grateful because he loved being loved by her.

V

THE DISRAELIS AND THE GLADSTONES

GLADSTONE had office and Disraeli had none. Mary Anne, who felt convinced that their situations ought to be reversed, could not help contrasting rather bitterly the different circumstances in which Gladstone and her Dizzy grew up.

Gladstone, five years younger than Disraeli, had been born in 1809, the son of a rich father, with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was educated at Eton under the headmastership of Dr. Keate. Eton at that time consisted of four hundred and ninety boys, and Dr. Keate, a famous flagellant, spent much of his time birching the four hundred and ninety boys. Gladstone, strangely enough for so worthy a character, suffered under one of Dr. Keate's birches, but in a good cause. Being at the time form præposter, he left out from a list of those to be birched three boys who said their parents were coming down to see them, and bled accordingly as a result of this kindly action.

He remained at Eton for six years, concentrating on the classics and reading widely in general literature. His great friend at Eton was Arthur Henry Hallam, who made a still more remarkable friendship at Cambridge with Tennyson. Hallam foretold that Gladstone would become the greatest orator of his time and Tennyson the greatest poet. The prophecy as regards Tennyson was correct, but whether Gladstone's oratory eclipsed Disraeli's can only be a matter of opinion. Gladstone's style has been defined very happily by one biographer, who writes of him that he "could envelop the simplest question with long, obscure sentences."

From Eton he proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford. There he became greatly involved in religion, ever a weakness of his, sampling it from various founts. He did not always agree with his preachers, and wrote of Newman: "Much singular, not to say objectionable, matter, if one may so speak of so good a man."

Thus, while Disraeli was brought up in more or less obscure

private schools, Gladstone received a public school and University education, and the ruling classes who formed the Governments of those days recognised no other kind.

Religion did not occupy his thoughts exclusively at Oxford. In May, 1831, he spoke at the Oxford Union for three-quarters of an hour, condemning the Reform Bill as calculated "to break up the whole frame of Society." Naturally these golden words seemed sweeter than honey to the Tory Duke of Newcastle, and so a year later he asked Gladstone to stand for the Duke's little borough of Newark as a Tory, or Conservative. Since Gladstone was to become known later as the great Liberal statesman this early indiscretion is very interesting.

He had not thought of a political career, and contemplated taking Holy Orders, although he wrote of himself in after life that he had no recollection of early love for the House of God and for divine service. However, his father built a church at Seaforth, and he remembered hoping his father would leave it to him so that he could live in it. Also he was once gravely shocked on a stage coach because someone asked a private soldier, also on the coach: "Pray, now, what is this Church of England?" to which the private replied: "Why, a damned large building with an organ in it."

Politics prevailed in the end and Gladstone went from Oxford to Parliament. It is nice to rake up their youthful sins against the eminent. Having been elected for a Tory borough he opposed the immediate abolition of slavery, the admission of Jews to Parliament and of Dissenters to Oxford and Cambridge, the abolition of naval and military sinecures, the publication of lists of voters in the House of Commons' divisions, and the ballot at elections. Disraeli at his worst was never so bad as that.

So, as Mary Anne reflected sadly, Gladstone passed painlessly to Parliament, while her poor Dizzy had to fight hopeless election after hopeless election. Gladstone's advantages did not end at that. His father, a Scottish merchant, left Scotland for England, like so many Scotsmen, and built up a big West Indian business at Liverpool. When he died he left £600,000, so that Gladstone was always a very rich man.

As Scotsmen do, he felt proud of the rise of his family from humble beginnings, and indulged in no picturesque romances as to his pedigree, like Mary Anne's poor Dizzy. "My grandfather," Gladstone confessed frankly, "was a merchant, in Scotch phrase; that is to say, a shopkeeper, dealing in corn and stores, and my father, as a lad, served in his shop."

Disgustingly enough from Mary Anne's point of view, Gladstone had achieved office at the age of twenty-five, whereas her Dizzy, at the age of thirty-seven, still remained a private member. Gladstone, in the Conservative Government of 1834–5, was Under-Secretary for the Colonies. This derived from Peel's double-first at Oxford, which Gladstone had paralleled, and the fact that Peel had won an Under-Secretaryship at the age of twenty-two. It is incredible nowadays that mere boys should have been given these offices, but at that age birth and influence remained paramount. Many of the population being illiterate, and voting by ballot unknown (the date of the English Ballot Act is 1872), the educated and influential few could do what they liked. The voiceless mob suffered and was silent. It may have been better on the whole that the intelligent elect should govern the voiceless mob rather than, as nowadays, the intelligent elect should attempt to bribe the vocal mob on the eve of election day with fair promises. It may have been better that politics should have provided the pastime of good families rather than the profession of political spell-binders. On the other hand, it may not.

Thus Mary Anne saw Gladstone as a rich and privileged young man, usurping by the accident of birth the office which her Dizzy should have adorned by virtue of sheer merit. This was a difficult pill for her to swallow.

Gladstone at the Board of Trade worked fourteen hours a day. His Scottish merchant ancestry had endowed him with an industrious nature. His grandfather kept a shop and his father worked in it as a lad. Gladstone, on account of his inherited wealth, could avoid the drudgery of a shop, but drudgery had no terrors for him, and so he developed his character by putting in long hours at the Board of Trade. As a result he became the most gifted financial expert of his time.

Mary Anne, summing up the evidence for and against the success of Gladstone and her Dizzy, could not help contrasting their respective marriages, and the resulting political influence.

Both Disraeli and Gladstone married in the same year. Disraeli, as we have seen, married Mary Anne, connected with a county family, the widow of an M.P., who inherited from him between £4000 and £5000 a year and a house in Grosvenor Gate.

Gladstone, already rich, made a far more important alliance. His bride was Catherine, the elder daughter and third child of Sir Stephen Glynne, the eighth baronet, by his wife, Mary

Neville, daughter of the second Lord Braybrooke. Her influence alone almost moved heaven and earth in the 1840's.

Catherine was born at Hawarden Castle, Flintshire, on January 6th, 1812, being thus three years younger than her husband, twenty years younger than Mary Anne, and eight years younger than Disraeli. Her mother, Lady Glynne, was a granddaughter of George Grenville whose Stamp Act lost us the American colonies, and niece of Lord Grenville, Prime Minister in 1806. His lordship's only sister married William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and her son was William Pitt the Younger. Consequently Catherine had four Prime Ministers in her family and married a fifth. The political influence she could exert made Mary Anne look like a servant girl.

Beyond that, the families of both her parents went back to remote antiquity, even as far as the Crusaders. Both Sir Stephen and Lady Glynne appeared on the Plantagenet Roll, and their ancestors had lived at Glynllifon (pronounced Glyn-thlif-on) in Carnarvonshire from time immemorial. It is curious to note the Welsh affinity both of Disraeli and Gladstone. Disraeli obtained his first seat in Parliament by favour of Wyndham Lewis, a Welshman, and Gladstone allied himself with incalculable influence to a Welsh girl of ancient family.

Sir John Glyn, a distinguished lawyer (1603–1666), founded the Hawarden branch of the family. Hawarden came into their possession through him, since he bought the place when it was sequestered in the Civil War. Mrs. Gladstone's grandfather, Sir John Glynne, became owner of an adjacent property, Broad Lane, and the house of Broad Lane was adapted into the Hawarden Castle where Gladstone lived.

In 1815 Sir Stephen Glynne died, and his widow brought up their four children, all less than six years old. In her diary she noted that Catherine was beautiful, high-spirited, and strong willed.

All this could not but detract somewhat from the glory of poor Mary Anne. Her rival appeared in the Plantagenet Roll and grew up with every possible advantage including that of looks, for although she possessed immortal charm Mary Anne was not, strictly speaking, beautiful.

Catherine Glynne's education corresponded with her time. A modern high-school girl would probably think her an ignorant little thing, but she had that which no high-school education can bestow, namely, personality and pride of race. She led an outdoor life, was a good horsewoman, and excelled at archery. She

read little, but received a sound training in welfare work among the local villagers. Mary Anne never indulged in welfare work. Such knowledge as she possessed taught her simply and solely to attract men. Catherine Glynne, with her social advantages and her long pedigree, did not need to attract men. She needed merely to sit and wait until some man who really attracted her plucked up courage to propose to the daughter of all the Glynnes.

Mary Anne, musing at Grosvenor Gate, realised that in conflict with the Gladstones she must depend solely upon her natural wit and charm. Compared to them she and her Dizzy were mere adventurers, with nothing but his debts and her legacy from Wyndham Lewis behind them, and this legacy, though very useful, did not amount to a great deal when set against her Dizzy's debts. Catherine and Gladstone had everything in their favour from the point of view of wealth, education, and family connections.

"But then," Mary Anne told herself, "Gladstone certainly isn't half so brilliant as Dizzy. Where would Gladstone be now, if he had to rely solely on himself, like Dizzy? And could Gladstone write successful novels if he were in debt and needed money?"

Still, the dice seemed loaded very heavily in Gladstone's favour. Except that Disraeli could always retreat to Bradenham when the worst came to the worst and hide there from creditors, since his father was capable of providing bed and board, his only assets were the faithful devotion of Mary Anne and his own audacity and industry. Gladstone was able to devote himself exclusively to politics, whereas periodically Disraeli found himself compelled to write novels in order to finance his very existence.

Mary Anne's saddest reflection centred on the fact that Catherine was twenty years her junior. She found herself aged forty-nine opposed to Catherine aged twenty-nine, just as Disraeli aged thirty-seven and officeless was opposed to Gladstone aged thirty-two in office and with previous experience of office.

"I am old enough," Mary Anne reflected, "to be Catherine Gladstone's mother. Inevitably she'll have children and I shan't, but they will add to her prestige and they may not affect her vitality."

Everything about the Gladstones was so essentially sound, correct and respectable. Once upon a time in winter the Glynnes spent some time at Hastings, and next door to them stayed Prince George of Cambridge and his cousin Prince George of Hanover.

Catherine enjoyed a natural gift of making friends and came to know the young princes very well. After all, her pedigree could be traced back to the Crusaders, eclipsing that of any Hanoverian prince. Consequently, all her life Catherine had no greater friend than H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, a dominant, overbearing, hard-swearing arrogant figure of the Victorian period. Queen Victoria's letters record what a pitched battle she and her advisers fought in order to make her cousin of Cambridge give up his post as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army when the War Office really could not stand him any longer. Such types make stout friends.

No wonder the young Catherine appealed to the forthright Prince George. She had sound common sense, great intuition and a very acute sense of humour. The last quality stood her in good stead during her married life when William insisted on having a long conversation with a cook, whom she wished to engage, chiefly on the subject of religion. William was like that. His Royal Highness liked a straightforward girl who could laugh if someone sat down in a purely imaginary chair or slipped on a piece of orange peel.

The advantages over Mary Anne enjoyed by Catherine make pathetic reading for admirers of Mary Anne. When Catherine reached the age of fifteen Lady Glynne took her and her sister Mary to Paris for the purpose of completing their education. The care of the most talented masters and mistresses was lavished on them. The great Liszt himself taught them to play the pianoforte. Catherine and Mary displayed an almost dazzling beauty, and even at the age of fifteen and sixteen attracted attention wherever they were taken, as needs must have been in Paris, the capital of France, *le pays du tendre*.

Young as Catherine was, the great world of fashion refused to let her beauty blush unseen. Lord Douglas admired her and her sister so much that he asked his mother, the Duchess of Hamilton, to call on Lady Glynne. Her Grace induced Her Ladyship to allow Catherine and Mary to appear, exquisitely chaperoned, it need hardly be said, at various balls given at the British Embassy, the Tuileries, and by the Duchess of Hamilton. It is a far cry from the British Embassy in Paris and the Tuileries of those days, not to mention the Duchess of Hamilton's establishment in Paris, to the Spa of Hotwells at Clifton and General Vernon-Graham's ball.

If it had not been for family influence Catherine might never have met Gladstone. Actually her brother Stephen had met

Gladstone at Oxford and struck up a friendship with him. Gladstone, after all, did not spend his entire time in churches listening to sermons and commenting on them in his diary.

When he came down from Oxford, Stephen, the head of the Glynne family, represented Flint Burghs in the House of Commons as a Liberal, and later sat for Flintshire from 1832 to 1847. Stephen loved politics very little, but he came of a powerful family as far as Wales was concerned, and the family and Wales expected him to live up to his responsibilities. He was a quiet, studious young man, and his bent concerned archæology rather than politics. A gifted psychiatrist has declared that people who lean towards archæology are afraid of life; they would rather, the eminent psychiatrist asserts, hide themselves in the past than face the present manfully.

However accurate or inaccurate the psychiatrist may be, Stephen Glynne delighted in archæology and one can believe or not believe that he found in it a refuge from life. Why the head of an ancient family, suitably endowed from the financial point of view, should wish to take refuge in archæology, who can say? His weakness might be put down to the ultra-refinement of in-breeding, but there is no evidence that the Glynnes were in-bred. Why should they be when they could command the respect of any family in England, or Wales?

We find Stephen a retiring man, very modest and refined. Probably Providence had never intended him for the rough and tumble of ordinary life, such as a Member of Parliament encounters to the most remarkable degree. Stephen should have lived the life of a dilettante idler, absorbed in the pre-Jurassic period, or some other period, but Heaven had ordained him the head of the Glynne family and compelled him to live up to his obligations. Hence we find him in Parliament, the most unsuitable member, it may be, ever driven into a division lobby.

The retiring nature of Stephen eventually wrecked the Glynne family. He had no business capacity and could not bring his intelligence down to the management of an estate. Like Disraeli, according to Clay's statement, Stephen should never have travelled without a nurse.

With all his failings he was destined to exert a definite influence on history.

When the girls grew up the Glynnes acquired the habit of foreign travel. Besides France they visited Italy, and once, walking with her brother Stephen in Florence, Catherine noticed an English gentleman, who, as he passed, raised his hat.

The English gentleman was young and handsome, with flashing eagle-like eyes, and a determined chin, so that Catherine, beautiful as she was, asked her brother Stephen:

"Stephen, who is that handsome young man?"

All brotherly contempt, Stephen answered:

"My dear Catherine, are you as ignorant as all that? Don't you know him? That's young Gladstone, the member for Newark. Everybody declares he'll be Prime Minister of England some day. Dear me, what's the use of being finished in Paris if you don't take the slightest interest in politics? Remember, Catherine, you should marry well. Your husband, doubtless, will figure in the great world of politics. If he finds you as uninformed on political matters as a housemaid, what on earth will be think of you?"

Catherine, remembering the tale told by her mirror, laughed secretly, and assured herself that her husband, whoever he might be, would think a great deal of her. She did not forget Gladstone but she did not remember him very frequently.

She had a great deal else to think of. She and her sister acquired the description of "the twin flowers of North Wales," and eligible men proposed to them in the light-hearted manner adopted by eligible men towards pretty girls. Unfortunately for the eligible men Catherine and Mary Glynne loved one another dearly, unlike most sisters, and swore an oath that neither should become engaged or married unless the other became engaged and married also. The law of probabilities being what it is, this private oath handicapped them greatly.

That passing glimpse of Catherine in a street in Florence had not left Gladstone unmoved. He loved her passionately and at the same time hesitated to propose. After all, the Glynnes were the Glynnes, that Plantagenet Roll and those Crusaders stuck in his throat, for his father had worked as a shop assistant, even if he did build a church afterwards, and send Gladstone to Eton and Oxford. Therefore, Gladstone remained silent and let the twin flowers of North Wales pursue their flower-strewn social path in London without interference on his part.

Although archæology bounded Stephen Glynne's interest from dawn till dusk, he did not remain completely unaware of the social life which flowed around him. Consequently, in the winter of 1835, when Catherine was twenty-three and a society beauty, Stephen asked Gladstone to stay at Hawarden. Gladstone accepted, but the beauty of Catherine made him afraid. In Florence she had captivated him, but in the socially regulated

QUEEN VICTORIA (1819–1901) RIDING IN WINDSOR PARK IN 1849

She married Albert, youngest son of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, in 1840 and had nine children by him. He died in 1861.

life of England he did not dare to speak of love. Those dead and gone Crusaders, troop by troop and squadron by squadron, paralysed his will-power. What was the grandson of a Scottish corn-merchant by comparison with this blue-blooded, exotic beauty?

There is a picture extant of Catherine, who excelled at archery, drawing the long-bow on the lawns of Hawarden. She wears a Gainsborough-ish hat apparently of leghorn or some other fine straw, and her frock, which touches the ground all round, outlines her delightful figure. She is young and slender and beautiful, and, at the same time, her face shows profound intelligence, and her lovely features are regular and remarkable, either singly or as a whole.

Catherine continued her triumphant career in society. Every man of their acquaintance longed for her, except the ones who longed for her sister Mary, but the compact between the two sisters held firm. Neither would marry without the other, and neither would take the first step.

Fortunately for her, Mary Anne had no sister and could play a lone hand. Not that any sister would have been allowed to interfere with Mary Anne's love affairs, because in her life, which lacked the impregnable social background of Catherine's, love affairs were too precious and important. All her life Mary Anne had been a free-lance, playing a lone hand and backing her own judgment. Catherine, with the Glynnes behind her, the counsel of her mother and the offensive-defensive alliance with her beautiful sister, added to the supreme self-confidence engendered by her own beauty, let men slip heedlessly between her fingers. Providence had created her a paramount lovely, entitled to pick and choose where she willed and at her own time. No persuasiveness on the part of any man could hurry or impress her. She and Mary pursued a calm path through the froth of admiring men, and waited in serene self-confidence till the two whom they could marry showed simultaneously above the social horizon.

Gladstone, the Oxford double-first, suffered from a tradition of work. Consequently he overworked, and in the winter of 1838–39 his doctors, alarmed in spite of Gladstone's iron Scottish physique, ordered him to leave England for the warmer climate of Southern Europe. Destiny led him to Rome, or possibly inclination led him to Rome, and there in Rome he encountered Stephen Glynne and his sisters.

London is one place and Rome another. In Rome Gladstone

found the courage to propose to Catherine. Stephen must have lent his countenance to the proceedings, because Gladstone was able to make his protestations in the Coliseum by moonlight, although the Coliseum by moonlight seems dangerous ground for a society beauty and a handsome young man, rich, eligible, and tipped for the Premiership of England. Human nature will out, and human nature in such surroundings might very well prove too strong.

In the Coliseum, by moonlight, Gladstone begged Catherine to marry him. He even quoted Byron's *Manfred* to this effect:

> "I do remember me, that in my youth,
> When I was wandering,—upon such a night
> I stood within the Coliseum's wall——"

Not very inspiring, perhaps, or very eloquent, but symptomatic of the time, the place, and the psychological situation between the two young people. Catherine appreciated the romance of her surroundings and of the quotation, but neither, nor the two together, moved her to surrender. If young Mr. Gladstone, tipped for the Premiership, with much of £600,000 inherited from his father, had proposed to Mary Anne in her twenties, she would have accepted him without a second thought. Catherine, accustomed to proposals from adoring and eligible young men, behaved otherwise. She refused Gladstone with all the charm and tact of a reigning beauty, and went home and told Mary the news.

The charm of a Welsh girl is too memorable for Gladstone to give up all thoughts of Catherine because she had refused him once. With a Scotsman's persistence he continued, on his return to England, to haunt every social function at which she was likely to be present. As time went on Catherine weakened perceptibly. After all he was amazingly handsome, and his boundless vitality almost swept her from her feet. She began to wonder if the pact with Mary never to marry unless Mary married did not seem on reflection a little rash and ill-considered. Then, miraculously, Mary confessed a great secret. She had fallen in love with the fourth Lord Lyttelton.

Thus, when in June, 1839, Gladstone proposed to Catherine once more she accepted him. The proposal took place at a garden party given by Lady Shelley, since Gladstone seems to have cherished a perfect mania for proposing in public places. At this period also the engagement of Mary to Lord Lyttelton was announced, and the two sisters planned a double wedding at

Hawarden, just as Mary Anne's mother and her twin sister had planned theirs at Plymouth in September, 1788.

That corner of Flintshire which includes Hawarden Castle naturally became all agog with excitement as the wedding day, July 25th, 1839, approached. The simple Welsh villagers craned their necks with eagerness and excitement to behold the distinguished visitors. On one occasion the bridegrooms walked together down the village street. Gladstone was tall and straight with a strong, handsome face and flashing dark eyes; Lord Lyttelton, for all he was the fourth of his line, had a slightly unkempt appearance, and being only twenty-one lacked the physical stability of his older companion; his features were rugged, his head large and his brow wide.

A villager, gazing at Gladstone, exclaimed admiringly: "It's easy to see that he's the lord!"

So much for heredity and the caste of Vere de Vere.

Poor Mary Anne's wedding lacked altogether the almost feudal pomp and extensive rejoicings and gaieties which signalised that of Catherine, but the twin flowers of North Wales did not celebrate a double wedding every day, so that not only the Glynnes and their guests but the humble villagers also drank and made merry in honour of the nuptials of Miss Catherine and Miss Mary. And if the Welsh bards were dumb nor twanged the Cambrian harp, Catherine's wedding at least did not lack a salutation in verse.

It chanced that Sir Francis Doyle officiated as Gladstone's best man, and Sir Francis was, among other things, a rather painful poet who enjoyed some notoriety in his own day. His sins of composition still linger in our midst, and many innocent school-children learn by heart to-day two melancholy compositions of his, "The Loss of the Birkenhead" and "The Private of The Buffs." Sir Francis' genial habit was to immortalise in verse, as he fondly hoped, various feats of military daring.

It was not likely, therefore, that the bride at whose wedding he filled the part of best man should escape his metrical attentions. His muse awoke and there resulted a poem entitled "To Two Sister Brides." Here are some of the verses relative to Catherine:

> "High hopes are thine, oh eldest flower;
> Great duties to be greatly done;
> To soothe, in many a toil-worn hour,
> The noble heart which thou hast won.

"Covet not then the rest of those
Who sleep through life unknown to fame;
Fate grants not passionless repose
To her who weds a glorious name . . .

"Be thou a balmy breeze to him,
A fountain singing at his side,
A star, whose light is never dim,
A pillar, through the waste to guide."

It seems almost excessive to ask a lady who started as a flower subsequently to fulfil the rôles of a balmy breeze, a fountain, a star, and a pillar, but much was expected of Victorian wives.

After their wedding, unlike Disraeli and Mary Anne who hired rooms in Tunbridge Wells, the Gladstones drove to Norton Priory in Cheshire, kindly lent them for the honeymoon by Sir Richard Brooke, the father of Catherine's best girl friend, Lady Brabazon. They continued, after a stay at Norton Priory, to Fasque, in Kincardineshire, Sir John Gladstone's place; Mary Anne could triumph over Catherine at this point because during Mary Anne's honeymoon the King of France received her husband and would have received her except for Court mourning. When the Gladstones finally arrived in London the odds became once more heavily in Catherine's favour, because William took her home to No. 13 Carlton House Terrace, which he bought in 1840. There is an awful splendour about Carlton House Terrace not enjoyed by Grosvernor Gate, and it lies convenient to the Houses of Parliament and the great political clubs.

There William and Catherine settled down to lead noble and model lives. Beside her beautiful face and figure the piety of Catherine had greatly attracted him when first he met her in Italy. Once, in conversation there, they had deplored the contrast between the luxury of English home life and the barrenness of English churches.

"Are we justified, do you think," Catherine asked in a distressed voice, "in giving ourselves all these luxuries?" and William set down in his diary the fact that he loved her for the question. Even when he proposed to her he explained that he had wished to enter the Church, but his father objected, and so he turned to politics, wherein he hoped to be active for the Church's glory. On the afternoon of their wedding day they read the Bible together, and William hoped it would become a daily custom while their lives lasted.

Fortunately for William, Catherine could never look upon

life with the portentous solemnity natural enough in a Scotsman with ecclesiastical leanings. The sense of humour with which she was born, allied to the natural coquetry of the Welsh girl, prevented their married life from degenerating into one long Scottish sabbath. William taught her among other things to keep a diary because he kept a diary, so it must be right. Mary Anne did not keep a diary because she liked being amused, and Disraeli only kept a fragmentary one during a short period of his life. Some of the entries in Catherine's are enlightening:

"I have been reading Hook's 'Sermons' . . . *Jan. 1st.* A new year is always an awful thing. God give me grace to become better in the future. I feel acutely how little good I do—but to feel is not enough. . . . At St. Martin's and St. James's churches. Before the end of the day William a different being, and his appetite returned."

If Mary Anne's Dizzy had been received during her honeymoon by the King of France, Catherine, five years after her marriage, was being asked by Queen Victoria to take her children to Buckingham Palace. The Royal children's governess was Sarah, Lady Lyttelton, Catherine's sister Mary's mother-in-law, who came out to receive Catherine and help her take off Willie's and Agnes' things before entering the Queen's presence.

The Queen had her three children with her. Princess Alice was a nice fat baby, thoroughly good-humoured; the Princess Royal was a head shorter than Willie Gladstone, not exactly pretty, but like the Queen and Prince Albert. The Prince of Wales was small; his head did not strike Catherine as well-shaped, and he had long trousers tied below the ankles and very full—"most unbecoming." His manners were charming and not shy.

Here, again, as Mary Anne could see, the Gladstones enjoyed incalculable advantages. It was a young marriage, followed in the natural course of events by the birth of children, subjects of perennial interest in a domestic age when the Englishman's home continued his castle and family life centred round the domestic hearth. Between the years 1840 and 1854 Catherine had eight children, seven of whom survived. Nothing could have gained her more prestige in the eyes of a monarch who herself became the mother of nine.

Sometimes the essential rightness of the Gladstones exasperated Mary Anne. They possessed everything: brains, breeding, wealth, a godly outlook on life, numerous children, a house in Carlton House Terrace, and Hawarden as a country retreat.

In the somewhat narrow-minded society of England they fulfilled every demand made by its members. Gladstone would never make a brilliant, cynical, taunting speech glittering with jewelled phrases. Nature had made him solemn, long-winded, dull, and pompous, and by so being he acquired merit in a House of Commons which valued pomp, dullness and flatulence in oratory. Gladstone possessed that outstanding virtue in the eyes of the English, namely, that he took commonplace matters seriously. Before making a speech he breathed a prayer, as though an ordinary speech in Parliament were of celestial significance, and probably he thought it was. Last but not least, he enjoyed the confidence and influence of the Church.

True, preoccupation with the Church had its drawbacks. In 1843 Peel wrote asking him to succeed Lord Ripon as President of the Board of Trade. Mary Anne's Dizzy would have leapt at the chance; Gladstone asked for time to consider the matter, saw Peel, and came back to tell Catherine there was a hitch, owing to the Church question: they walked in Kensington Gardens, and he asked her to pray for him. Disraeli would have asked Mary Anne to dance with him. Gladstone then consulted Hope and Manning, two ecclesiastical experts. Finally he accepted cabinet rank. Catherine hoped the responsibility would not injure his health, and wished he had a horse.

Catherine had always behaved perfectly as the wife of one destined to greatness. She obeyed the behest of the excellent, if pedestrian, Sir Francis Doyle who, in yet another wedding-day stanza, had enjoined her:

> "He presses on through calm and storm
> Unshaken, let what will betide;
> Thou hast an office to perform,
> To be his answering spirit bride."

Catherine became more than a spirit bride since she bore him eight children, and even in this department of life she behaved perfectly because her first baby, born on June 3rd, 1840, was a boy, William Henry, and so her initial exploit in maternity provided William with an heir. Socially she excelled, as befitted a Glynne; we find her dining at the Archbishop of York's, sitting next to Guizot at Hallam's, being introduced to Peel at Lady Jersey's, meeting the Duke of Wellington at dinner, but having, unfortunately, his deaf ear. In spite of that her charm conquered, for she received an invitation to Apsley House to meet the King of Prussia.

Mary Anne, watching Catherine as the years fell past, noticed all these things not bitterly, but with a keen appreciation. Mary Anne's life, after all, could never approach Catherine's in many respects. If her Dizzy had been born twelve or fourteen years earlier, and become her first husband instead of her second and begun his political triumphs during her youth, she too could have taken the social stage as the blooming young bride of a coming man, making the same delightful picture as Catherine, with her children about her and the mystery of motherhood upon her. Now that could never be; she called Dizzy's novels her children, but really he was her child and she united in herself the offices of wife and mother. He would never ask her or anyone else to pray for him because he belonged to a type which believes that God helps those who help themselves, but he would turn to her in his distracted moments for sympathy, and then Mary Anne had her reward.

Catherine might hold sway at 13 Carlton House Terrace, but William bought it for her. Mary Anne had taken Dizzy into her own home and made it a harbour of refuge while he fought his battles. Dizzy would give her something more wonderful than a home in Carlton House Terrace one day. Meanwhile she loved to have him dependent on her for the simple necessities of life like a roof and a fire, not in order to enjoy an easy sense of power, but in order to give to the man she adored.

Besides, she missed some of the sorrows of Catherine. On July 27th, 1845, Catherine bore her second daughter, named for her Catherine Jessy, "a nice fat thing with famous lungs to judge by her voice, the mouth so small with short upper lip, the hair darkish, very placid, and takes much notice for her age." In 1850 poor Catherine Jessy fell ill with meningitis and died. Her little white hands were folded across one another and they placed lilies of the valley about her.

William took Catherine to Brighton to recuperate.

Apart from her love and dutiful admiration for William, Catherine and he reversed entirely the rôles of Mary Anne and Dizzy. William exhibited the virtues of method, neatness and punctuality to the highest degree and the last thing he needed was a nurse when he went on his travels. Indeed he excelled at packing to such an extent that a certain type of travelling bag became known as the Gladstone bag. Once an acquaintance placed before him a grave problem: what did he consider the best method of packing a wet sponge?

William replied that, personally, before packing a wet sponge

he always wrapped it in a bath towel and then stood on it, thereby extracting the last drops of water. The acquaintance marvelled at the efficiency of this device.

Catherine displayed neither method nor order in her life. She considered that her untidy characteristics were very good for William, because to live with an unmethodical wife made him the more human, though it was difficult to make human a husband who really liked working from twelve to seven every day at the Board of Trade. She cared little about clothes and preferred to walk home after dining out. Her casual attitude to life was always getting her into scrapes, but as William once observed, gloomily one imagines, for he would feel strongly on the subject of cause and effect, crime and punishment, she had a marvellous faculty for getting out of them. At any rate she brought William to the point of standing on the hearth-rug with her and singing as a duet:

> "' A ragamuffin husband and a rantipolling wife,
> We'll fiddle it and scrape it through the ups and downs of life."

Obviously William was never really a ragamuffin husband. He merely sang the words in jest. Ragamuffin and he had nothing in common.

Aside from her sense of duty and admiration for his learning—both Catherine and her sister confided to each other in some horror after their honeymoons that their respective husbands, even when honeymooning, would often produce from a pocket some volume of a Greek or Latin classic in the original tongue and begin reading it—Catherine could bear with William because she had the facility to sleep at will. She could lie down at any time, sleep for ten minutes and awake much refreshed. This may be a talent of the Welsh race, for Mr. Lloyd George could always sleep at will during the daytime even when he carried, as Prime Minister, the responsibilities of the Great War.

In later life she took greatly to good works, a fact which may have resulted from her early training as a youthful Lady Bountiful at Hawarden. Conversely, the impetus may have come from being driven by Lord de Tabley in his cabriolet one day in March to the Mendicity Society, where they stayed a long time. Catherine found the work of the interrogators full of interest, but wished she could have seen less asperity and suspicion in their manner. She established a refuge for the houseless poor in Newport Market, and was a constant visitor at the London Hospital even during a cholera epidemic.

Perhaps, in Mary Anne's view, she could afford the luxury of good works because William was rich, whereas Mary Anne and Dizzy never had much money to spare. Still, like Mary Anne, Catherine followed the drum when her husband set forth on political campaigns and looked after William's creature comforts. Indeed, after William had appealed to women, at Dalkeith in 1879, having received a velvet table-cover and an album of views from the ladies of the county, to bear their part in the political crisis, Catherine became President of the Women's Liberal Federation, an exceedingly early example of feminine political activity. Unfortunately her unmethodical nature prevented her from ever acquiring the routine of a public meeting, but then William, in urging women to the rescue at Dalkeith, had remembered they were but poor weak frail creatures. He was asking them, he said with that winning simplicity of style which must have endeared him to them:

> "to perform a duty which belongs to you, which, so far from involving any departure from your character as women, is associated with the fulfilment of that character and the performance of its duties, and the neglect of which would in some future time be to you a source of pain, but the accomplishment of which will serve to build your future years with sweet remembrances, and which will warrant you in hoping that each of you, within your own place and sphere, has raised your voice for justice, and striven to mitigate the sorrows and misfortunes of mankind."

No doubt this admirable little sentence went straight home to the meanest female intelligence in Dalkeith.

In the home Catherine showed herself, in the phrase of a biographer of hers, "skilful in the general management of her husband." She pandered to his small weaknesses, such as taking thirty-two bites over each mouthful and liking a glass of port after dinner, and his fad for punctuality. William expected to dine at 8 p.m. precisely, and would wait for no one unless the sinner happened to be a celebrity. When three people had appeared he would give a mighty shout of "Quorum!" and stalk off into the dining-room.

It was in such matters as these that Catherine's sense of humour came to her rescue.

Born on January 6th, she came under the planet Capricorn, which rules between December 20th and January 20th. Such people are sincere and idealistic; they do not marry in haste, and

they often live exceptionally long lives, doing their most successful work after middle age. Catherine fulfilled the prophecy of the astrologers, for she lived to be eighty-eight, and far from marrying in haste refused her husband's first proposal. Also she did much of her most successful work in the cause of philanthropy after middle age.

Mary Anne, who was clever with men, always maintained a sincere friendship with Gladstone, which goes to prove that he possessed great appreciation and kindness, for Mary Anne, one of the most delightful women who ever lived, was his friend, and his wife, the charming Catherine Glynne, admired him.

It could not have been mere policy or social expediency which prompted Mary Anne's friendship with Gladstone, because no one could detect humbug and hypocrisy more readily than he. They liked and respected one another, and Mary Anne declared that after a bitter Party battle in the House Gladstone would always call at Grosvenor Gate to demonstrate that political enmity had nothing to do with private friendship.

When Mary Anne, then seventy-five, became critically ill in 1867, Gladstone made such a touching reference to her condition in the debate on the Address, that Disraeli replied with tears in his eyes. Feeling afterwards that he had not expressed his thanks adequately, he wrote to Gladstone, mentioning Mary Anne's strong personal regard for him. Gladstone replied that he had always been grateful for, and sincerely reciprocated, Mrs. Disraeli's regard.

Gladstone and Catherine were guests at Mary Anne's great party given to celebrate Disraeli's elevation to the premiership; on this occasion she was so ill that she could hardly drag herself about and so triumphant that nothing short of death would have prevented her from entertaining in his honour. When, in 1868, Queen Victoria created Mary Anne a peeress in her own right, Gladstone ended a formal letter to Disraeli by asking him to present Gladstone's compliments on her coming patent "to (I suppose I must still say, and never can use the name for the last time without regret) Mrs. Disraeli."

At Mary Anne's death Gladstone wrote Disraeli a very beautiful letter of sympathy, recalling that they had been married in the same year and had enjoyed the blessing of a happy marriage for a third of a century. He ended:

"I offer only the assurance which all who know you, all who knew Lady Beaconsfield, and especially those among them

who, like myself, enjoyed for a length of time her marked though unmerited regard, may perhaps render without impropriety; the assurance that in this trying hour they feel deeply for you and with you."

Thus it is clear that Mary Anne's valiant heart, personal charm, and unswerving devotion to her husband, captivated even the staid Gladstone whose mind differed completely both from hers and Disraeli's. She possessed those elemental qualities which appeal to all human beings whatever their caste or creed, political or religious.

Probably no one understood better than Gladstone the fierceness of Disraeli's struggle for power, accentuated by his perpetual lack of money. Certainly no one understood better how much Mary Anne counted in that struggle, for Gladstone also enjoyed, in his own words, "the priceless boon" of a beautiful, faithful, loving wife.

The reason for his understanding is not far to seek; Mary Anne was a fighter and Disraeli a fighter, and Gladstone was a fighter also. His father and grandfather bore the brunt of a struggle for existence, and he understood at second hand, if not at first hand, what it meant to be poor. His own battles took place on the floor of the House, and here he learnt to respect Disraeli; but he knew also, as everyone else knew, that, however late the sitting, Mary Anne would be waiting up for Disraeli to see that he had his supper just as he liked it, and then pack him off to bed; behaving, in fact, exactly as Catherine would behave when her husband returned to Carlton House Terrace.

Thus the friendship of Mary Anne and Gladstone arose and persisted, and the staid unbending Gladstone unbent a little under the persuasive influence of Mary Anne. For one thing he found her charming, for another, he respected her, and thirdly, since she was almost old enough to be his mother, she understood him far better than could a woman within a few years of his own age.

His industry and devotion to duty made her feel a little tired, in sympathy, and at the same time she saw him as a brave and earnest little boy who longs to kill lions and Indians, and bring civilisation to the heathen.

VI

COMRADESHIP

FROM 1841 onward Mary Anne and her Dizzy began that slow and arduous pursuit of fame which ended in his becoming Prime Minister in 1868, when he celebrated the event with the historic remark :

"Yes, I have climbed to the top of the greasy pole."

In the first place it became necessary to defeat Peel. Neither Mary Anne nor Disraeli could be said to love him very much. He had refused her Dizzy office after her humble plea made in a letter. No woman likes making a humble plea, even to a Sir Robert Peel, still less to have it refused. Peel passes across the political stage a strange contradictory character. At times he could show himself a remarkable orator, he had his generous moments as when he cheered pointedly Disraeli's maiden speech, but he suffered from a queer shyness, and occasional arrogance. He had been described as "Oxford on the surface and Liverpool below."

And yet he had a most appealing side to his character which showed itself in his passionate love for his beautiful wife and his affection for his children. One of the most touching letters ever written is from Peel in London to his wife in the country telling her how desolate the house is without her, and how he looks at the dressing-tables in her room and misses her still more. The letter concludes with a message to one of his little daughters that he has her watch and will wind it up every night.

Still, there is no mercy in politics.

The revolt began by the formation of a Youth Movement (for there is nothing new under the sun), consisting chiefly of a few young men educated at Eton and Cambridge, chief among them George Smythe, Lord John Manners and Alexander Baillie Cochran. These young men, as young men will, displayed romantic tendencies, and longed to become a gang of political Galahads, launching a spiritual revival among the nobility and

gentry so that these might be inspired to lead the people upward and onward. George Smythe & Co. hated the middle class, for, with all its virtues, the middle class is not picturesque like the nobility and gentry.

George Symthe and his friends turned at first to Peel, an unfortunate gesture, for Peel, a middle class person himself, saw nothing romantic in politics, which he believed, rightly, to be a practical science. Disraeli, perceiving the store of energy and influence underlying the fantastic exterior of the Smythes and John Mannerses, gathered them to his bosom and became their leader and guide. He, if anyone, should understand the extravagances of youth, for no youth could have been more extravagant than his own. Grosvenor Gate became their rallying point, and Mary Anne, who understood men, especially young men, brooded over them in a spirit half sentimental and half maternal. That her influence was marked may be gathered from the termination of one of Smythe's letters to Disraeli: "Pray lay me at the little feet of Madame."

The little group arranged to sit together in Parliament; they believed in Toryism, wished to reconstruct that Party, hated the Whigs, and desired to improve the conditions of the people. Quite naturally they ate out of Disraeli's hand, and kissed that of Mary Anne. One of Peel's followers summed them up in the remark: "The puppets are moved by Disraeli." He might have added with truth "and by Mary Anne." Nevertheless Lady Peel asked Mary Anne and Disraeli to a grand rout on July 21st, 1843. The battle was not yet joined. Mary Anne also attended a party at the Rothschilds', and she and Disraeli stayed at Deepdene with Mr. Hope all September. From Deepdene they departed on a hurrah cruise to the North.

At Manchester there was what Mary Anne described as "a grand literary meeting" in the Free Trade Hall, at which Disraeli was prevailed upon to speak. No less a person than Charles Dickens took the chair. Disraeli in his speech condemned the idea that commerce and manufacture were out of sympathy with art and poetry and instanced the great merchants of Venice who patronised Titian and Tintoretto. Mary Anne was much admired.

When Parliament met in February, 1844, the hostility of Peel to Disraeli and Mary Anne became evident. Disraeli had asked for a post for one of his brothers, and it was refused. Also Peel did not send Disraeli the usual notice to attend Parliament and they exchanged a slightly cool correspondence on the

subject. Disraeli did not begin hostilities immediately Parliament met, but inspired "Young England" to vote for the Government on the Irish question, on which he then proceeded to make a great speech, summing it up in a famous sentence.

> "Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy and an alien Church, and in addition the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish question."

The speech brought him so much fame, even a bouquet from Peel, that Mary Anne was entranced. On Sunday night, February 18th, 1844, she made him sit down after dinner and write out a copy of the favourable comments it evoked.

She was soon to have one of what she called her children, for Disraeli, out of office with time on his hands, and a perpetual lack of money, sat down to write *Coningsby*. Henry Hope suggested it when Mary Anne and Disraeli were staying at Deepdene, in the autumn of 1843, and the idea was to throw contemporary politics into the form of fiction. Consequently *Coningsby* became to a great extent a history of the "Young England" movement. The novel appeared in May, 1844, published by the ever invaluable Colburn. Disraeli and he divided the profits equally and Disraeli made £1,000 out of the first three thousand copies. The book went into three large editions in three months and the United States took fifty thousand copies.

The critics praised *Coningsby*, the public read it, and Isaac, down at Bradenham, declared that the man who had made the finest speech of the session had written the best book that ever was written. Lady Blessington wrote to Mary Anne that even she could not be more proud of the book than Lady Blessington. Mary Anne was enchanted.

Towards the end of the session Disraeli made a direct attack on Peel, accusing him of coming into power on the strength of his Party's votes and relying for the permanence of his ministry on his political opponents.

In the summer Manchester, to Mary Anne's great delight, invited her Dizzy to take the chair at a literary meeting. Previous to the visit to Manchester he spent three days alone in his constituency at Shrewsbury, remarkable for the tributes of everyone to Mary Anne, and their disappointment at her absence. They even longed for the railway to be finished because then they hoped they could see her more often.

Disraeli wrote to her that among the shopkeepers, whom he

most wished to please, she was a particular favourite. "Such a gay lady, sir!" they said. "You can never have a dull moment, sir!" The faithful Dizzy, who really did love Mary Anne, told them she was a perfect wife, and that he was separated from her for the first time in five years, and the separation included their wedding day. Sympathetic ladies wept at the news. He ended his letter by saying that they must postpone their wedding feast, but if he died for it he would write her some verses. He never let the anniversary of their wedding day pass without writing her verses.

They held a great meeting at the Bull, and one, Taylor, a maltster, took the chair. He proposed Mary Anne's health and said that to be her husband was quite enough to fit a man for representing Shrewsbury.

Mary Anne went with Disraeli to Manchester in company with Lord John Manners and George Smythe, and they travelled about the North studying the industrial situation. Their wanderings included a visit to the Duke of Buckingham at Stowe in very distinguished company. Mary Anne wrote all about it to Bradenham, her letter a mixture of annoyance and triumph.

First they had had to wait in a poorly lighted vestibule with no seats, no fire, a draught, and a marble floor. Dizzy shivered, and Mary Anne looked cross in black velvet, hanging sleeves looped up with knots of blue, and diamond buttons, with a head-dress of blue velvet bows and diamonds.

Eventually they were introduced to the presence of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, with the Duke calling out their names. The Queen retired at eleven, and then Peel came up to Mary Anne and Dizzy with every sign of cordiality.

Mary Anne's triumph came later in the evening. The Duke offered her his arm and took her through the supper-room and back, down the middle and up again, and he did this for no one else but the Queen. Finally Mary Anne sat on a sofa with the Duchess, who said that the Queen had pointed Dizzy out, saying: "There's Mr. Disraeli!"

The way in which Mary Anne rejoices over the scene at Stowe and the Queen's interest in Disraeli makes delightful reading. Mary Anne had all the simple joy of a child in being happy and admired. May the earth lie lightly on the good Duke of Buckingham for paying her his compliment, she being, as he remarked, the wife of one of his oldest friends. Many sins might be forgiven him for making her so happy.

Another of her literary children arrived a year after *Coningsby*. The new book was called *Sybil; or The Two Nations*. The two nations in this case are the rich and the poor, and the novel deals largely with social conditions. It bore like a banner on the title-page this dedication to Mary Anne:

> "I would inscribe this work to one whose noble spirit and gentle nature ever prompt her to sympathise with the suffering; to one whose sweet voice has often encouraged, and whose taste and judgment have ever guided, its pages; the most severe of critics, but—a perfect Wife!"

While he wrote *Coningsby* and *Sybil* he sent a series of little notes to Mary Anne. These she kept carefully and they were found after her death. Some of them asked her to go for a walk, or for a glass of wine, but in one he begs her to come up and discuss a point in the novel with him. Thus the dedication need not be dismissed as flattery.

Otherwise, in 1845, Disraeli revenged Mary Anne and himself on Sir Robert Peel. In a series of crushing speeches Disraeli baited his leader mercilessly, to the applause of Mary Anne. They are full of sparkling phrases, calculated to wound.

> "There is no doubt a difference in the right hon. gentleman's demeanour as leader of the Opposition and as Minister of the Crown. But that's the old story; you must not contrast too strongly the hours of courtship with the years of possession. . . . The right hon. gentleman, being compelled to interfere, sends down his valet, who says in the genteelest manner: 'We can have no whining here' . . . Dissolve, if you please, the Parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people, who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative Government is an organised hypocrisy. . . . It is well known what a middleman is; he is a man who bamboozles one party and plunders the other. . . . The right hon. gentleman caught the Whigs bathing, and walked away with their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position, and he is himself a strict conservative of their garments. . . . I look on the right hon. gentleman as a man who has tamed the shrew of Liberalism by her own tactics. He is the political Petruchio who has outbid you all."

In spite of everything Peel, supported by the Whigs, repealed the Corn Laws. The Duke of Wellington summed up the

situation characteristically (as Mr. Buckle records, quoting the Greville Memoirs): "Rotten potatoes have done it all; they put Peel in his damned fright."

The defeat of Peel was not compassed by Mary Anne's Dizzy alone. He secured a powerful ally in the person of Lord George Bentinck, the second son of the Duke of Portland, in the days when lords were lords and dukes were dukes. The influential Tories wished to form a third party.

Lord George, at first sight, seems the last man to have engineered the overthrow of a ministry. Judging from his portrait he typified the average figure in contemporary prints of gentlemen (or noblemen) riding to hounds. In his portrait Lord George wears mutton-chop whiskers which exhibit a luxuriance of undergrowth almost unparalleled. Hitherto the scene of his triumphs had been the hunting-field, and, symbolically enough, for he cut a great figure on the turf, his conversion to political leadership was brought about by the horse, which has always bulked so largely in English politics.

Lord George, since *noblesse oblige*, sat in eight Parliaments without taking part in any great debate. He was, in short, horsemanlike, but dumb. He had had a military training, a peculiarly sad handicap. Apart from all this he indulged in sentimental feelings about the Corn Laws. He thought that to unsettle the Corn Law of 1842 would be dishonourable to Parliament as well as to the Government. Consequently he would move an amendment to the Queen's speech unless they could find a better man. He kept horses in three counties, and they told him he would save £1500 a year by free trade, but what he could not bear was being sold.

His value in the new movement was represented by his social position. Disraeli provided the brains and Lord George the talking point. Disraeli found himself able to win the confidence of Lord George, as he could always win the confidence of any man useful to him, and so dictated the strategy of the new Party.

It must be said for Lord George that he worked hard. He ended a debate that lasted three weeks. He spoke for a long time, in great detail, with diffidence. His speech had much effect. A man who understood horses could exert great influence over Members of Parliament.

Finally Disraeli convinced Bentinck that they could not defeat the Government on the Corn Laws, but they could defeat it on the Coercion Bill. It was divided upon on the same night

that the Lords passed the Corn Bill. After the division someone whispered to Sir Robert Peel:

"They say we are beaten by 73!"

Peel said nothing, but extended his chin, a sign of annoyance. As a result of the division he resigned.

Disraeli wrote to Mary Anne from the Carlton that the ministry had resigned, and it was all *Coningsby* and *Young England*. He deserved his epistolary triumph. He had stage-managed Lord George Bentinck, his whiskers, his racehorses, his hunters, his intellectual shortcomings, his dictatorial character peculiar to a man who had never been crossed, and his inferiority complex in the House of Commons. Through the agency of this singular nobleman, who, an outdoor man, gave up his outdoor pursuits on a matter of political principle, Disraeli had created a triumph.

Lord John Russell then formed a Whig Cabinet in July, 1846, with Palmerston as Foreign Secretary, the favourite office of Palmerston. Disraeli went stumping about the country with Bentinck. He shared a special train with Bentinck, themselves alone, as he told Mary Anne. The whole promenade was a paradise of dukes and lords. Bentinck became a little tiresome on their return to Westminster, but it all blew over. In the autumn at Bradenham Disraeli finished *Tancred*, at the same time keeping an eye on politics. Bentinck congratulated him on remembering politics and not confining himself to poetry and romance. Naturally a man who had kept horses in three counties would have his doubts about poetry and romance.

Bentinck visited Disraeli at Bradenham, and when Parliament opened in January, 1847, he sat on the front bench of the House for the first time. Mary Anne's prophecy regarding her political protégé was beginning to come true.

At the next general election he realised the ambition of his life, to represent the County of Buckingham in Parliament. The connection of Mary Anne and Disraeli with Buckinghamshire was one of the most happy and characteristic circumstances in their lives. Mary Anne was born in the West, and Buckinghamshire has an atmosphere of spaciousness and remoteness shared by no other county near London. The motor coaches may park in Aylesbury nowadays, but Aylesbury market differs little from the Aylesbury market of Disraeli's day. A race of people living not far away on the heights of the Chilterns, who are said to descend from robbers chased into the hills in Cromwell's day, are still wild and remote in their fastnesses, and men

still live in huts in the beechwoods near Wycombe and turn chair-legs by hand for the Wycombe chair industry. Above all there are those very beechwoods clothing the hills with their delicate green.

Buckinghamshire is not a tame county like suburban Surrey or over-sentimentalised Sussex, and neither Mary Anne nor her Dizzy was a tame person. Hence they understood Buckinghamshire and Buckinghamshire understood them. He first fell in love with her at Bradenham, and later made her the lady of Hughenden only a few miles away. The scenery of Buckinghamshire, of all counties close to London, most nearly merits that adjective "sublime" which Disraeli worked so hard in describing his early travels, and the Bucks peasant is as difficult and tenacious as his native clay, but a fine fellow once he has brought himself to trust the stranger. The gods of Buckinghamshire, like those of the West, are very old. It is a county for giants rather than for the suburban villas of stockbrokers, and it will always retain its elemental, agricultural character because the soil of the Vale of Aylesbury is some of the richest in England.

In the result Disraeli was returned unopposed and thus he began a connection with the county of Buckinghamshire which continued for almost thirty years.

Mary Anne, considering her beloved Dizzy, thought how wonderful it seemed that since his marriage to her in 1839, only eight years previously, so many triumphs had come his way. Bentinck might nominally be the leader of the Country Party, but all the world knew him as merely the figurehead, for a landed gentleman must lead a Party based upon the great landlords, the squires, and the Shires; all the world recognised her Dizzy as the power behind the throne.

Nothing in his life became Bentinck like the leaving of it. There was trouble in the Party about Jewish members and the oath to be sworn by Members of Parliament. Bentinck and Disraeli supported the Jews. The Party did not approve of Bentinck's attitude. He had found himself in poor health for some time, and resigned the leadership of the Party on the Jewish question. On September 21st, 1848, he set out for a walk from Welbeck through the woods to Thoresby. He never reached his destination. A heart attack came on and later they found his dead body lying by the path.

He di l a martyr to his principles, giving up the outdoor life to hich he had been accustomed in order to assume a Party leadership which he never sought. One of his ambitions

was to win the Derby, but on taking seriously to politics he had sold his horses in order to concentrate on the House of Commons. Among those sold was a horse called "Surplice" which won the Derby in 1848. Looked at from this distance of time, Lord George Bentinck's later political career seems a sad anti-climax. He would have been so much happier with his horses, winning the Derby with "Surplice," than as a Party leader.

Disraeli, his cardinal virtue that of gratitude, wrote *Lord George Bentinck, A Political Biography*, published in 1851, as a memorial to his dead friend.

Mary Anne felt that she could claim her share in the triumph over Peel because, just before the campaign against Peel, she had taken her Dizzy on another continental holiday. Before leaving he had asked Lord Carrington to make him one of his lieutenants, because he proposed to visit Berlin and considered his appearance in a red coat would make a greater impression than if he wore plain clothes. Lord Carrington obligingly consented, but the visit to Berlin never materialised. Instead Disraeli and Mary Anne settled down in Cassel.

They found the place primitive, lacking both books and newspapers, but they took a house and hired a Flemish cook. Mary Anne sent home to Sarah at Bradenham a recipe for stewing pigeons. They were to be done with cloves, eggs, and onions, and a red-brown sauce. Here we have Mary Anne showing herself the good housekeeper. They could buy six chickens for five francs and meat for sixpence a pound. Crossing to Boulogne they had seen, to Mary Anne's joy, large advertisements of *Sybil*.

It was all very simple and happy and intimate. Dizzy got up at half-past five and went to bed at nine. There were mignonette and Alpine strawberries in the garden. One of the charming features of his character was that he never overlooked a flower.

They stayed at Cassel for two months, a quiet married couple, indulging in the simplest of pleasures, walking and reading. Mary Anne calculated that in the two months she walked three hundred miles which, even counting five weeks to each month, makes thirty miles a week, or an average of over four miles a day including Sundays. Since she was fifty-three at the time the total did her infinite credit.

After that they came home via Paris to the defeat of Peel's Government.

Tancred, another of Mary Anne's literary children, had

appeared on the scene in 1847. It is really the third of a trilogy in which *Coningsby* is the first and *Sybil* the second. The reviewers were kind, the public lukewarm. Soon after it was published, Colburn, the ever-reliable, told Mary Anne he had sold a first edition of 1500 copies (including free copies). Her Dizzy made £775 out of the sale of 2250 copies.

There arose then the burning question of the leadership of the Conservative Party, that is such of it as did not follow Peel, in the House of Commons. Mary Anne knew that Dizzy had led it for a long time, with George Bentinck as a figurehead, and that now Bentinck was no more Dizzy should lead it in title as well as in fact. Unfortunately the matter was not quite so simple.

Stanley, the Stanley who had told Peel when Peel was forming a Government that if Disraeli were taken in he would not remain himself, wrote a long and crafty letter to Disraeli signalising his many virtues, admitting that as a debater no one in the Party could pretend to compete with him, and then suggesting Herries as leader. Herries was the gouty old gentleman who had given Disraeli good advice after his maiden speech and explained that dullness rather than brilliance in a new member appealed to the House. Stanley mentioned with sorrow that he himself suffered at the time of writing from severe gout.

Disraeli replied politely that he heard with regret of Lord Stanley's sufferings, that leading the Conservative Party in the House involved great sacrifice, and why should Disraeli throw away his life on the chance of fame that scarcely appealed to him any longer?

He knew that no one else approached his merits as a Party leader, and saw no reason why he should serve under a nonentity. Mary Anne became a little thoughtful. A malign fate seemed to decree that whenever dear Dizzy had success almost within his grasp some circumstance intervened to frustrate him.

Stanley inquired if Disraeli would please change his mind, throwing in an agricultural allegory about a man who has put his hand to the plough not being able to turn back. Disraeli wrote to Mary Anne at Hughenden all about it in a sort of diabolical glee. Nothing short of his letters can give an idea of the intrigue and cross currents. Mary Anne sent him violets from Hughenden; she knew that was what he would love best in the midst of plots and counterplots. Finally a compromise was arranged; a committee of Herries, Granby, and Disraeli should lead the

Party, with equal power, but Disraeli would be the real leader. Anything else would be impossible since neither Granby nor Herries could hold a candle to him.

That was on February 1st, 1849. On February 22nd he could tell Sarah that he really was the leader.

Disraeli wrote all these things to Mary Anne at Hughenden, because the changes in his private life had been no less dramatic than those of his public life. His mother died in 1847 and his father in 1848.

Mrs. Disraeli flits across the scene like a busy but unsubstantial wraith. Her effect on her eldest son's life seems to have been practically negligible. Sarah once reproached him for not giving her more credit in the eyes of the world, but the very fact that Sarah needed to remind him of her existence proves how little influence she exerted. Even Mary Anne made not a great deal of her, though Mary Anne adored old, blind Isaac.

He had been blind since the year 1839, for when Mary Anne and Disraeli returned from their honeymoon and persuaded him to consult a specialist in London no results followed. Mary Anne's gay letters from London, read to him by the faithful Sarah, brought sunshine into his existence, and for the rest he toiled at his books as well as he could, for Sarah became his secretary. But as Disraeli wrote of his father in a memoir: "his previous habits of study and composition rendered the habit of dictation intolerable, even impossible to him."

The faithful Sarah bore her mother's death with fortitude, but the task of breaking the news to the blind Isaac taxed even her courage. He was eighty-one, a very old man. His portrait shows him a charming and intelligent man, the fair hair mentioned by Disraeli receding from his forehead, the Bourbon nose not quite so evident as in his son's description.

He only survived his wife by nine months and died after a short illness. He left 25,000 books, willed that his personal property should be divided into twelve parts, whereof four were to go to Sarah, two to Ralph, two to James, and the rest with his real estate to Benjamin. As has been recorded already he left his collection of prints to his beloved Mary Anne.

Disraeli, who remained ever faithful to the obligations of friendship or kinship, established his brothers in life. Ralph had been obtained a Government post worth £400 a year. Later another was found for James. Sarah settled down at Twickenham and remained there till her death.

Before Isaac died, however, Disraeli had fulfilled his ambition and made Mary Anne the Lady of Hughenden.

The financial arrangements which led up to the purchase of Hughenden were so complicated that it is almost impossible to follow them. The place cost, with the timber, £34,950, and Disraeli had not anything like that in the wide world. Apparently Isaac bought it in the first place for his son in 1847, and Disraeli then approached the task of finding money to complete the bargain.

Accounts differ as to how it was found, but the Bentincks came into the matter. Lord George said he had the ideal leader for the Conservative Party, but the Party refused to accept him because he was not a landed gentleman. To this Lord Henry replied: "Why not make him one?"

In the result the three brothers, the Marquess of Titchfield, Lord George and Lord Henry, lent about £25,00 on a mortgage.

Looking at the matter from a common-sense standpoint Mary Anne never ought to have been made the Lady of Hughenden, because her Dizzy remained deeply in debt when first he considered buying the place. Hughenden apart, the money he inherited on Isaac's death might have straightened out his affairs and left him solvent for the first time since his Stock Exchange speculations with Evans. As it happened he was a born gambler, and when in his mind he balanced solvency and no landed interest against debts and the position of a landed gentleman, he did not hesitate for a moment. Hughenden must be his at any cost, and so the tortuous negotiations went on, under the guidance of Philip Rose, a solicitor of the firm of Baxter Rose & Norton.

Unfortunately some years later the Marquess of Titchfield, who was a Peelite among other things and also eccentric, suddenly decided to ask for his money back. Disraeli borrowed as usual, at heaven knows what interest, enough to pay off the noble marquess.

That troubled him very little because long before he had been enabled to write to Mary Anne: "It is all done, and you are the Lady of Hughenden."

If getting into debt can ever be commended, Mary Anne and Dizzy could not have made a wiser decision than the one which induced them to buy, or owe for, Hughenden. It was described by a connoisseur as the prettiest place in the country; the possession of it gave Disraeli local importance, invaluable to him as a county member, and also provided him with a refuge in

those fits of invalidism which assailed him periodically. There was no Bradenham any more since the death of Isaac and he could not have maintained his health at Grosvenor Gate. His love of flowers and trees and the country had been developed too strongly. What did he care for debts as long as he possessed Hughenden?

Mary Anne, of course, loved the place. She was a country girl, and the country fascinated her. All her married life, except for the early days with Wyndham in Wales, where she was not amused, she had spent in London, or in constituencies canvassing for Wyndham. Partly the peace of Bradenham had decided her to listen to the impetuous wooing of the political protégé, and now, only a few miles from Bradenham, she came into possession of this adorable old house with its seven hundred and fifty acres of estate.

Besides, her Dizzy had given it to her.

All the time that he wrote to her from London giving her details of the financial shifts and expediencies that were to make the acquisition of Hughenden possible, she was in possession of the place, supervising the removal of furniture and books from Bradenham. Some of Isaac's books would have to go, but they kept the best of them.

The house held unutterable charm. It was of whitewashed brick, and had three storeys, and faced due south to catch all the sunshine. Mary Anne could not leave it in its original state. She added various "improvements" which may or may not have increased the architectural merit of Hughenden. She certainly ornamented the terrace with vases from Italy, and put up a monument to Isaac in the style of the Italian Renaissance.

Disraeli had a small study on the first floor, looking south. From it he could see the terrace with Mary Anne's Florentine vases, and the peacocks. There were indeed peacocks because he said categorically: "You cannot have a terrace without peacocks."

The house of Hughenden, seen from the south, has great charm. Two bays break the line of the front elevation and the ground-floor windows are creeper clad. They look on to the terrace from which a flight of steps leads to the lawn over which great trees keep guard. The house suggests even to the most unimaginative that it is not only a house but a home. No wonder that Mary Anne and Dizzy were happy there.

Apart from the house there were the woods, which formed one of the chief beauties. Mary Anne, a country girl, set

ALBERT, PRINCE CONSORT, YOUNGEST SON OF THE DUKE OF SAXE-COBUI
WHO WAS MARRIED TO QUEEN VICTORIA IN 1840

He literally worked himself to death [illegible]

herself to improve them, and Disraeli always referred to her efforts in this respect with pride. She cut walks among the beech trees with great skill, directing personally the work of two labourers. Dizzy told her she had done what no other woman or man either could have done, and in the first year of their possession she did work extremely hard, not only on outdoor improvements, but in arranging the furniture and organising the household so that Hughenden should become the ideal retreat for an overtaxed and weary statesman.

Mary Anne and her Dizzy now became county magnates and for the first time in his life he enjoyed the solid and picturesque background for which he had always longed. Mary Anne entertained perfectly for him, and some of the gatherings at Hughenden deserved the adjective stately. Not all the guests at Hughenden, however, were celebrities. Mr. Sykes quotes the description by a writer in the *New Century Review* of September, 1899, of a treat for schoolchildren at Hughenden, the period being 1860.

"It was in this decade that the crinoline flourished, and Mrs. Disraeli wore over hers a petticoat of fine cambric with innumerable flounces exquisitely goffered. I remember making a mental calculation of how many hours it would take her *blanchisseuse* to goffer those flounces, and I came to the conclusion that it could not have been manipulated in eight or nine.

"Over the petticoat was looped a white dress of delicate French muslin, powdered with purple pansies. The crinoline showed the long dress and petticoat to advantage, as well as the youthful-looking figure, whose head was crowned with a simple white straw hat, trimmed with a band of black velvet. (Mary Anne was then sixty-eight.)

"People said she was twenty-five years older than her husband (actually she was twelve years older), but as she skipped and ran about with the children she did not look a day over forty."

This picture by an unbiassed observer sets forth all Mary Anne's undying charm. Her frock, her hat, her demeanour, and her joyousness are all perfect. No wonder the writer could add that Mr. Disraeli watched his wife's efforts to amuse the children with an amused delight and unconcealed admiration.

Mr. Buckle, in the official Life, makes it equally clear how much Hughenden meant to Mary Anne and Disraeli. Every autumn he retired there worn out by the strain of political life, a victim to nervous depression and exhaustion. All he longed for was to be alone with Mary Anne in their country home.

He had a love for trees, shared equally by Mary Anne, and

loved sauntering in the park examining them all. He liked talking to the men who worked among them. He became in all respects the typical country gentleman when at Hughenden. He appeared at the Quarter Sessions regularly, and took the deepest interest in local events such as flower shows and harvest homes. He even advised crossing Cotswold rams with Southdown ewes, a complete novelty at the time.

After all, why not be interested in such matters? He was a Jew, descended from Jacob and Esau, the greatest flock masters of all time, and he had a passion for flowers and trees. These things are apparent in his writings. There is a passage in *Endymion* about trees in autumn over every word of which he must have lingered almost ecstatically, and he wrote in *Lothair* of his longing to go into the country for the first note of the nightingale. Unfortunately the nightingale's song coincides with the sitting of Parliament, when destiny drove him to forsake Hughenden for Grosvenor Gate.

In all this love of country life Mary Anne shared. Even in her sad declining days when she was too old and ill to walk any longer through the woods she would accompany her dear Dizzy in a little pony carriage along the paths she herself had cut.

Those were simple days when right was right, and wrong, wrong. It is on record that the vicar rebuked Disraeli for travelling to London one Sunday after morning service, and requested him to set a better example. Disraeli replied a little coldly. Finally the vicar left, and Disraeli presented the Rev. Charles Whishaw Clubbe to the living. They remained very good friends.

As might be expected, moving into Hughenden cost a great deal of money, but Disraeli was able to write to Mary Anne that the altogether admirable Colburn was eager to publish once more. Apart from his own books, Disraeli meditated a reissue of Isaac's works which had run out of print.

It is a sad thought that even the greatest and the most beautiful and charming in this world are at the mercy of money. In 1849, financial tribulation overwhelmed Disraeli's old friend Lady Blessington, and also D'Orsay, the sophisticated, the beautiful, whose bills he had backed, whose advice he had taken, whose hospitality he had enjoyed. Not all Lady Blessington's literary industry availed to save her from the wreck, and, of course, D'Orsay never had much industry, literary or otherwise. It might be written of him:

"As rich and purposeless as is the rose
Thy simple doom is to be beautiful.
Thee God created but to grow, not strive,
And not to suffer, merely to be sweet."

The unhappy pair fled to Paris. They knew Louis Napoleon very well, a powerful ally. It is doubtful if Mary Anne minded very much about D'Orsay and Lady Blessington, but Disraeli wrote her a very proper letter, saying all the right things most beautifully. Not very long afterwards she died of apoplexy.

Mary Anne could look back on those years between 1839 and 1849 with calm satisfaction. They had been his best years so far, and they were the years spent with her. The net result was leadership of his Party and the purchase of Hughenden. She was now fifty-seven and he forty-five. She saw no limit to the measure of his fame as long as she could mother him, counteract that timidity concerning life which had always been and always would be his great weakness, and keep him in sufficiently good health to let his brain function at its brilliant best.

If no more than tact or courtliness were needed his triumph was assured. Let us take the Crystal Palace as an example. In 1851 it housed the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. A Colonel Sibthorpe (writes Mr. Buckle) described it as an "unwieldy, ill-devised, unwholesome castle of glass." Disraeli, on the contrary, referred to it as "that enchanted pile which the sagacious taste and prescient philanthropy of an accomplished and enlightened Prince have raised for the glory of England, and the delight and instruction of two hemispheres."

In 1852 the Whig ministry fell, defeated by 135 votes to 126. The Queen sent for Lord Derby. The noble lord, against Disraeli's advice, still hankered after protection, thus losing his opportunity to unite the Conservative Party. For example, Palmerston refused to join Derby's Government because, although he believed in a duty on foreign corn, he could not contemplate, in the year 1852, any disturbance of Free Trade. Therefore Derby formed a Government which did not include Palmerston, in which Disraeli became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mary Anne's Dizzy was in office at last.

He became a member of a quaint Cabinet. Only three of them had ever held office before. Sarah wrote to Mary Anne voicing a thousand congratulations. People who wanted something flocked to see her, she said, because they thought, apparently, that she had only to ask her brother, the Chancellor of the

Exchequer, in order that he might grant their requests. George (Young England) Smythe said that, having hailed the dawn he had a right to salute the meridian, and kissed Mrs. Disraeli's hand. Who shall say how much influence Mary Anne had exercised on Young England?

The Press grumbled about Disraeli's appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer. If he was going to lead the House, how could he be Chancellor as well? At the time Queen Victoria actually did not care for the idea of his holding office. How strange are the changes time brings about! Still, everything arranged itself and he was able to inform Sarah that the Court was gracious and the Press amiable.

Then began that series of fascinating reports of the business of the House written by Disraeli for Queen Victoria, so different from the usual official style. They cannot be quoted here, but they recall the finest achievements of an unimaginably gifted gossip writer. Their charm and novelty were not lost on Her Majesty. Perhaps this Mr. Disraeli was not so undesirable after all.

At this time it became the task of Mary Anne to acquaint the faithful Sarah with the news from day to day. Disraeli was handling a completely raw team in the House of Commons. Derby sat in the Lords and could do little to help. Disraeli said that he literally had not time to eat his meals, but this must be an exaggeration. Mary Anne would never have let him go hungry.

In those days Mary Anne and Disraeli made a new friend and the manner of the making suggests the most unplausible, if charming, kind of fairy tale. As far as Disraeli was concerned the friendship took on a romantic character, but Mary Anne had no cause to be jealous, since his admirer in this case was between seventy and eighty years of age.

At Torquay there lived an old lady called Mrs. Brydges Willyams. She was a widow. She was born Miss Mendez da Costa, of Jewish descent though she followed the Christian religion. We must remember here Disraeli's reference to the Mendez da Costas in his sketch of his ancestry, referred to previously. Miss Mendez da Costa married a Colonel Brydges Willyams of the Cornish Militia. Commissions in the Militia seem to have been three a penny in those days if one possessed the necessary influence, hence the Colonelcy of Wyndham Lewis, also in the Militia. Probably it would have been a sad business to send either Colonel Brydges Willyams or Colonel Wyndham Lewis on a course at Wellington Barracks.

Colonel Brydges Willyams died, leaving his wife a widow without children, just as Colonel Wyndham Lewis died leaving Mary Anne a widow without children, and Mrs. Brydges Willyams continued to live at Torquay, a haven of rest for many elderly widows with means of their own.

Disraeli was a public man, and according to the lot of public men received many letters from strangers of both sexes which, very wisely, he ignored. Mrs. Brydges Willyams formed the habit of writing to him after he had made a celebrated speech or published a new book, and, as in the case of other unknown correspondents, he took no notice of her letters.

It is, as a matter of fact, a queer feature of old ladies that they write to men of whom they read in the news. No author of any notoriety lacks his quota of letters from old ladies. They have nothing much to do, esteem their own opinions, and foist them on the notorious author, or public man, either agreeing with him or disagreeing. The distinction is without a difference. All they want is a letter from a presumably interesting stranger, which will brighten their dull lives, for the lives of elderly widows are often singularly dull.

Mrs. Brydges Willyams, as has been recorded, was not exactly in her first youth. In all her letters she displayed great intelligence and admired the Jewish race. This latter predilection attracted Disraeli's attention.

In 1851 Disraeli took his lawyer a letter from Mrs. Brydges Willyams. In it she said that she was about to make her will, and that she wanted Disraeli to be one of her executors. She added that her executors would be her residuary legatees to a substantial amount.

Thereupon Disraeli hedged. He asked for time to consider and took six weeks. After that he wrote again that he was visiting Devonshire for political reasons, and so would give himself the honour of calling on Mrs. Brydges Willyams at Torquay.

This news gave Mrs. Brydges Willyams considerable pleasure. She was a stout, sturdy old lady, fond of dogs, and could often be seen stumping along with a couple of dogs on the lead. She possessed a cultivated literary taste, and wrote most excellent letters. Although in the eighteen-fifties Torquay was a great deal more remote from London than it is to-day, this did not prevent her from keeping abreast of the times and taking a deep interest in all that went on in the world.

She must have enjoyed robust health, because she gave

robust expression to her thoughts; she was a fine old aristocrat, a worthy descendant of the Mendez da Costas.

Disraeli duly called on her at Mount Braddon, Torquay, probably in the autumn of 1851, a brief visit which merely served as a reconnoitring expedition. The friendship began, as so many friendships have begun, with presents of books. Disraeli sent her *Tancred*, a tactful gift, since the novel deals with the Jewish race, to which she and he belonged, and Isaac's *Curiosities of Literature* prefaced with the memoir by his son.

For these books Mrs. Willyams expressed herself as duly grateful. Being a gallant old lady she was, although between seventy and eighty, going up to London to see the Great Exhibition. She knew Disraeli was at Hughenden, but suggested that if he came to London while she was there they might meet at the Crystal Palace, which then housed the great Exhibition in Hyde Park. As it turned out the meeting never took place.

This is the authoritative account given by Mr. Buckle, and puts out of court one by Froude, in which Mrs. Willyams is said to have met Disraeli at the fountain in the Crystal Palace and given him a packet which contained a bank-note for £1000, with which to pay election expenses.

The friendship persisted. Disraeli, continuing his presents of books, sent her his memoir of Lord George Bentinck, and also a portrait of himself. She addressed him as My dear Sir, and he addressed her as My dear Madam. In 1853 with Mary Anne he paid a second visit to her at Torquay, and stayed a week; they were delighted with her and she with them. Mary Anne's incalculable charm captivated her, and Mary Anne always loved anyone who admired her Dizzy.

This episode of Mrs. Brydges Willyams forms yet one more remarkable example of Disraeli's attraction for women older than himself, and their attraction for him. They form a distinguished and remarkable company: Sara Austen and old Lady Cork in his earlier days, then Lady Blessington, whose wisdom he imbibed freely, whose marked personality he admired so greatly; then Mary Anne, whom he loved and married, and afterwards Mrs. Brydges Willyams. Of further interest is the fact that Lady Blessington, Mary Anne, and Mrs. Brydges Willyams were all three widows.

One of Disraeli's peculiarities was that a correspondent to whom he could pour out all his thoughts on the political situation and other topics formed an essential part of his life.

Hitherto this correspondent had been his sister Sarah and gradually Mrs. Willyams began to replace Sarah in this respect. Mrs. Willyams, if the truth must be told, wrote much better letters than Sarah. Moreover Mrs. Willyams seems to have enjoyed sound literary judgment, and so Disraeli, on his literary side, could write to her more or less as to an equal. Naturally his letters to her showed a formality not seen in those to Sarah, but apart from that there is occasionally a touch of patronage, condescension, or writing down to one's audience in the letters to Sarah. He would hardly have taken Sarah's views on literary topics so seriously as those of Mrs. Willyams. At any rate he told her that her criticism of one of his books was brilliant. That is a handsome tribute from an author to an admirer, since few authors take kindly to criticism.

They were both lovers of flowers, gardens, and the country, and exchanged views on these favourite topics. In no sense need Mary Anne feel herself left out in the cold, because she often replaced her Dizzy as a correspondent when great affairs occupied all his time. Besides, she accompanied him every year on a visit to Torquay, where they took rooms in a hotel, and saw as much as possible of Mrs. Willyams.

Also, Mary Anne was a great gardener and here she found a fervent ally in Mrs. Willyams, who sent her cuttings from the milder climate of Torquay to plant at Hughenden, while they exchanged as well cut flowers from their respective gardens. Presents of fish also arrived from Mrs. Willyams, including prawns, which Disraeli described poetically as the rosy tribute of Torbay.

The thought arises inevitably as to whether this long and carefully pursued friendship of the Disraelis for Mrs. Brydges Willyams arose purely from delight in her company, her letters, and her presents of fish and roses, or whether it was influenced largely by the knowledge that, as her executor, Disraeli would inherit a considerable sum when she died, unless her disposition changed and she altered her will. To put the point brutally, were they so assiduous merely in order to keep her in a good temper?

A devil's advocate could put forward the plea that Mary Anne had a most practical, housekeeperly mind and great common sense, that she knew her life interest in Wyndham Lewis' estate would cease at her death, and that in the nature of things she would die before her dear Dizzy. The burden of his debts and the interest on borrowed money still remained.

Money, she was sadly aware, would always slip through his fingers. What happened, for example, when Isaac died? Disraeli, instead of using his inheritance to regularise his financial position, proceeded at once to the purchase of Hughenden and involved himself still more deeply.

Therefore, Mary Anne might have said to herself, if a rich old lady down in Devonshire, much older than Mary Anne, chose to admire Dizzy and make him her heir, it was only common sense for Dizzy's wife to propitiate the old lady by every means in her power. Similar thoughts might well have occurred to Disraeli.

Conversely we must remember that he showed always an unfailing chivalry and kindness towards women, particularly towards those older than himself; also the strong bond of race linked Mrs. Willyams to him. Beyond that, he had for kinsmen, according to his own theory, the Medinas and the Laras, and she was born a Mendez da Costa. More important than all the rest, perhaps, she admired him, and admiration was as necessary to him as air to breathe. He could never have enough admiration; it neutralised the sense of inferiority with which he was born, which he would carry to the grave. Even in hours of triumph over Gladstone in his heart of hearts he never forgot that Gladstone was educated at Eton and Oxford and owed no man a penny piece, that generations of Glynnes lay behind Mrs. Gladstone, she was related to four Prime Ministers, and her family appeared on the Plantagenet Roll.

We may conclude that, while Disraeli kept his prospective legacy in mind, he would have behaved just as charmingly towards Mrs. Willyams had no legacy existed. The same conclusion applies to Mary Anne.

She was the kindest creature in the world, and Mrs. Willyams admired Dizzy. Mary Anne would have thought her an imbecile had she done other than admire Dizzy, but the fact of her admiration rendered her sympathetic. Besides, Mary Anne could not have possessed a mean and grasping disposition, because her handwriting proves the contrary.

To anyone with even an elementary knowledge of graphology, the handwriting of Mary Anne is full of interest. To begin with the lines slant upward from left to right across her notepaper, thus showing her to be courageous and an optimist. The writing itself is large, indicating generosity, and extremely firm. In places she seems positively to dig the pen into the paper. It has a certain amount of ornament, chiefly confined to the tails

of y's, g's, etc., bearing witness to the vanity to which she confessed when she analysed her character and Dizzy's in parallel columns, but the tendency to ornament is restrained so that the vanity could not have been pronounced.

Certainly it is not the handwriting of a mean, grasping person who would plot and scheme unceasingly in order to gain money.

The truth of the matter seems to be that, just as Disraeli married Mary Anne not for her money, as most people supposed, but qualities in her which made an irresistible appeal to something in his nature, so he entered upon and preserved a friendship for Mrs. Willyams for similar reasons. A common feature of the two cases was that both ladies had money, but Disraeli would not have troubled his head about either had money constituted her sole attraction.

Mary Anne and Dizzy did not only tell Mrs. Willyams about flowers and trees, and the trout he caught and sent her and the fluctuations of politics, but about family troubles, such as the death of Jem's wife, who became a bride, a mother and a corpse in eight months, and the death of Sarah in 1859. Mary Anne herself sent the news in order to break it personally to Mrs. Willyams.

So the friendship continued, with the constant exchange of letters and presents, and the Disraelis' annual visit to Torquay until 1863 when Mrs. Willyams died. She had never visited Hughenden during her life, but she longed very greatly to be buried in the family vault in Hughenden Church.

The vault in the church had been closed, and the Rev. Charles Whishaw Clubbe said it could not be opened. Therefore Disraeli had a vault made in the churchyard and there Mrs. Willyams was buried. He declared that neither Mary Anne nor he should be buried in the churchyard vault, but so they were in due time, and the three friends share the same grave and the same monument.

Mrs. Willyams left £40,000, and Disraeli inherited more than £30,000 of this. Naturally the legacy made a great difference to his financial affairs, because, for all Mary Anne's careful housekeeping, it had been difficult in the first years at Hughenden to make both ends meet. As it happened, 1863 brought yet another windfall in the shape of money.

Early in the year, Andrew Montagu, a very rich Yorkshireman, one of those Yorkshire squires whose four-in-hands Disraeli had admired in his youth, on his way up to Scotland to see

Lockhart and Scott about that ill-fated newspaper *The Representative*, asked to be told how he could employ his money most usefully to assist the Conservative Party. Someone suggested that the best thing he could do was to buy up Disraeli's debts, and let him pay the rate of interest a bank would charge instead of the extortionate interest charged by moneylenders. After a conference with a friend of Disraeli's, Montagu took over the debts against a mortgage on Hughenden and charged 3 per cent for his money.

Thus a load of anxiety became lifted from Mary Anne. All they possessed with which to meet the expenses of keeping up Hughenden and the house at Grosvenor Gate, entertaining, and travelling, was her £4000 or £5000 a year, the revenue from Disraeli's books, and his ministerial salary when in office. Isaac's legacy had gone towards buying Hughenden. The legacy from Mrs. Brydges Williams and the saving on interest placed them in a comfortable condition for the first time in their married lives.

Mary Anne deserved financial comfort if ever any woman did, for she had contributed magnificently in courage, love, tact, and energy towards Disraeli's success. When first he took office, she was, in his own phrase, very gay and ubiquitous. She did not stop at gaiety and ubiquity. Mr. Sykes, in his biography, reproduces in facsimile a note she wrote on this occasion to her dear Dizzy. It runs:

> "Bless you, my darling! Your own happy, devoted wife wishes you joy. I hope you will make as good a Chancellor of the Exchequer as you have been a husband to your affectionate Mary Anne."

This is the perfect letter of a perfect wife, and it is not without reason that in the preface to *Sybil*, Disraeli described Mary Anne as a perfect wife.

With the passing of time her responsibilities increased, for Disraeli came more and more to depend on her. Lady Blessington was dead, and Mrs. Willyams was dead. Sarah had died towards the end of 1859. In the autumn she stayed with Mary Anne at Hughenden, and all through the visit Mary Anne marked sadly the increasing delicacy of Sarah. Perhaps the mainspring of Sarah's life had run down; for her existence meant doing good to others, and now no one needed her very much. Isaac, her father, was dead; Ralph and Jem, her brothers, were out in the world, the old home at Bradenham had been broken up, and Mary Anne sufficed for Dis. Meredith, Sarah's lover,

lay dead long since in Cairo, and she would love no more. The mere mechanism of life, eating and drinking and keeping a home for herself, interested her very little. Her need was to be wanted or perish, it could no longer be fulfilled, and so, metaphorically speaking, she turned her face to the wall and begged the God of her fathers to let her depart in peace.

Disraeli wrote of her as she lay dying to Lady Londonderry, that she was a person of great intelligence and charm—one of those persons who are the soul of a house and the angelic spirit of a family. Unless he disposed of a reach-me-down rhetoric which flowed automatically whatever was toward, and few do, the tribute is too perfectly expressed for sincere grief. It is to be feared that Disraeli was one of the many who took from poor Sarah without giving an equal amount in return. She offered him admiration and sent him geraniums to lighten the gloom of his rooms in Duke Street, but nothing in all their correspondence suggests that he ever gave her anything.

To become a great man one must be an egoist, using all and sundry to the fullest advantage without necessarily making any return, because to take is strength and to give is weakness, and the great man and the egoist cannot afford to be weak. Sarah, and of such is the kingdom of heaven, gave perpetually to her brilliant brother, considering the opportunity to give a privilege.

For all her merit, and it was manifold, Sarah remained to her brilliant brother little more than an audience. This is the lot of the Sarahs of this life, and for some inexplicable reason they are content.

Nothing in the wide world is so dead as dead politics. Threading a path through the politics of the mid-nineteenth century, one is struck by the remoteness and banality of it all, the complete divorce between the aristocracy and the so-called common people, who could do nothing to help themselves, being on the one hand illiterate, and on the other unable in the mass to vote at elections. One becomes indescribably bored with the inexpugnable power, enjoyed for no apparent reason other than territorial and family consequence, by the Palmerstons, Derbys, Lord John Russells and the rest. The rise of a Disraeli makes a refreshing change, but even in his case the wire-pulling, back-scratching, casuistry, and tactical expediency become infinitely wearisome to anyone but a politician. The country and the people mean little, and dishing the Whigs, or passing into law some contentious bill which has provided a Party background in Government after Government means everything.

In December, 1852, Disraeli, introducing his budget, spoke for five hours, a heroic feat at least. He was recovering from influenza, and Mary Anne at home became almost frantic. Little notes were sent to her as to his progress. She learned at nine o'clock that he had spoken for nearly four hours. At ten o'clock they told her he had just finished and looked very tired, and that they would send him home as soon as possible. The Queen, impressed by the effort, sent congratulations, and Lyndhurst wrote lyrically to Mary Anne regarding the triumph of her Dizzy.

Unfortunately, on a division the Government was defeated by 305 votes to 286 and Disraeli's budget lost. The Government resigned, in a cloud of polite words, and Mary Anne had to carry on without Disraeli's salary as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

England then became the prey to the horrors of a Coalition Government.

In spite of Mary Anne's bland influence Disraeli and Gladstone burst into a most acrimonious correspondence, not about the tottering Empire, or the repeal of the Corn Laws, or the Irish Question, or any other of the current mares' nests, but the furniture in Downing Street to be taken over by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer (Gladstone) from the old (Disraeli). In particular there was a robe, passed down, according to Gladstone, from one Chancellor to another, which, he said, he would be happy to receive. He never did receive it. Disraeli involved him in a fog of furniture and kept the robe, which he had bought.

The acrimonious correspondence in the beginning began "Dear Sir" or "My dear Sir," but towards the end lapsed into the third person so that "Mr. W. E. Gladstone has read with regret and pain the note which he received last night from Mr. Disraeli." On the whole Disraeli had right on his side.

In 1853, Mary Anne experienced the joy of sharing a triumph with her dear Dizzy. Lord Derby, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, put down Disraeli for an honorary degree, and he went up to receive it wondering what would happen to him at the hands of the undergraduates. Mary Anne sat in the Ladies' Gallery prepared to rejoice. She, at least, had no doubts. As happens so often with women, she was justified of her faith.

The undergraduates greeted him with roars of applause. When he sat down, he put his eyeglass to his eye, and raked the Ladies' Gallery for a sight of Mary Anne. Having found her he raised his hand to his lips and sent her a kiss. They were fellow adventurers, and his triumph should be her triumph.

In the autumn poor Mary Anne became very ill. She was sixty-one and the fourteen years of her married life with Disraeli, every one of them replete with vicissitudes, had been enough to try the strength of a middle-aged lady, however greatly endowed with health and spirits. One might describe her life throughout those years as happy but harassed.

Even Disraeli, aged forty-nine, felt the strain. He was always on the edge of triumph and then, just as everything seemed about to fall into his hands, fate intervened and he found himself in the wilderness once more, confronting a Coalition Government under Lord Aberdeen, of whom he had written that "his temper, naturally morose, has become licentiously peevish."

The reaction from all these ups and downs could not but have its effect on Mary Anne. She had suffered the grief of Isaac's death and removed to Hughenden, arranged the furniture, staffed the household, cut walks in the woods, planted shrubs, corresponded with Mrs. Willyams, agonised over Dizzy's five-hour budget speech, walked three hundred miles at Cassel, kept an eye on Grosvenor Gate, survived financial crises, been gay and ubiquitous, looked pretty, said the right thing to Gladstone, and permitted the bright young spirits of Young England to lay themselves at her little feet. All this cost a great deal of effort at her time of life.

Consequently she found herself in a state of acute nervous debility. Disraeli remarked sorrowfully to Lord Londonderry that she was the soul of his house and managed all his domestic affairs, and to find Mary Anne in the depths of neurasthenia revolutionised his life. With her invariably gallant courage she struggled against her afflictions and could manage to depart from Hughenden in November on a round of visits. A little later Lord Derby asked Disraeli to stay at Knowsley, but did not include Mary Anne in the invitation. It may have comforted her to be told that Knowsley was a wretched house, yet very vast.

In the following January Mary Anne relapsed and saw her doctor while passing through London. Unfortunately she also caught influenza and almost died of it down at Hughenden. Disraeli contracted the disease himself and became moderately piteous, his usual frame of mind when visited with physical afflictions, particularly if deprived of Mary Anne's skilled household management. A more helpless person in the conduct of his domestic affairs never lived. Deprived of some competent woman to look after him he merely quivered like a shorn lamb in a snowstorm, hoping to heaven some other competent woman,

moved by the pathos of his situation, would come to the rescue.

Fortunately for him, Mary Anne survived. She had sworn never to hear him speak in the House until he became Prime Minister, and she rather wanted to hear him speak in the House. She was getting old now, but old women are tenacious of life and ambitious, and Mary Anne refused to let influenza rob her of the sight of Dizzy in Prime-Ministerial glory addressing a House of Commons which hung on his words.

Mary Anne recovered, and Disraeli recovered, and in January, 1855, the Coalition fell, defeated by a majority of 157. The Queen sent for Lord Derby. He failed to form a Government, Palmerston became Prime Minister, and Disraeli found himself doomed to the wilderness once more at the age of fifty. Not a very encouraging state of affairs for Mary Anne at sixty-two, scarcely recovered from acute nervous debility.

Yet there were consolations. Mary Anne and her Dizzy dined at the Palace in 1856. The Queen said that being an early riser and addicted to cold shower baths *she* never caught cold.

In the summer they betook themselves to Spa, because Disraeli had been told to drink the waters, and where he went Mary Anne went also. She was a seasoned traveller by now, but the days had gone by when, as at Cassel, she would get up at half-past five, and walk three hundred miles in three months. Queen Victoria might take her cold showers and welcome, but Queen Victoria was only thirty-seven. Dizzy now suffered from nervous debility, and Mary Anne found herself completely occupied with the care of him. In combating his nervous debility she probably forgot about her own.

Spa she found exceedingly gay and pretty with lime trees and a vast concourse of carriages. Disraeli wrote to Mrs. Willyams and referred to the water of the Spa as "the renovating element" which suggests that he could not have felt quite so intensely ill as he claimed to feel.

They lingered on happily at Spa seeing a few people, but not too many. They had quitted England without leaving an address, and so no letters or political rumours came to trouble their solitude. Disraeli was tired of effacing himself on behalf of Derby, who never showed any courage in a political crisis, and longed for peace. Mary Anne longed for it equally with him. At present they were out of office and looked like remaining there, so why not make the most of a holiday.

Dreaming, she recaptured the days of her honeymoon when

also they had crossed to the Continent after those first few days in the rain at Tunbridge Wells. You could gamble, or go to concerts, or follow the crowd in any other of its diversions, but they cared for none of these things. They sought only peace, the society of a few people, and a slow regaining of health.

Mary Anne enjoyed her summer and autumn. She felt stronger and happier than she could remember feeling for some time. In September they returned leisurely to England and went down to Torquay to visit Mrs. Willyams. After that the peace and repose of Hughenden seemed very welcome.

Roaming about the house and gardens she saw with that practical glance of hers that this tree needed pruning and that border planting, this room renovating and that rearranging. At length she found her calm shattered. Dizzy began to exhibit renewed energy, as always after experiencing the tranquillity of Hughenden. They left for London and proceeded thence to Paris because Dizzy had arranged some mysterious meeting with Napoleon III.

In Paris there are other things beside politics to interest a woman and Mary Anne never lost her love for frocks. Besides, she found herselt fêted extensively. Dining at the Tuileries she sat beside the Emperor and Dizzy beside the Empress.

Unfortunately the political side of the expedition prospered but mildly. Napoleon conceived a very moderate opinion of Disraeli, thus showing himself a poor judge of men. They returned home with little accomplished from Disraeli's point of view, but Mary Anne knew exactly what was being worn or going to be worn. Success in the world of Cabinets and Parliaments seemed as elusive as ever, but Mary Anne had courage and Disraeli knew himself to be indispensable. Some day Derby, with his whist and billiards and racing, would find that all these, coupled with gout, precluded the leadership of a Party, or else the Party might tire of Derby, except that no Party would dare to tire of a nobleman so influential.

It seemed practically impossible to combine influence with political flair. Disraeli's political strategy made Derby look like an infant in arms, but Derby was a national figure.

The intrigues went on, the backstairs gossip, the political dinners, the secessions and acquisitions, the quarrels and bickerings and reconciliations. Out of this muddy maelstrom some tangible result would emerge some day. Till then Mary Anne, with restored gaiety and Paris frocks, became once more the life and soul of her London world.

Palmerston was Prime Minister (1857), seventy-three years of age, hale, hearty, skilful and popular. The elections returned him a large majority. There was nothing, obviously, to be expected from him for Mary Anne's Dizzy.

Palmerston enjoyed the most prodigious vitality. Mr. Buckle quotes two characteristic anecdotes of him.

At the age of eighty, after a division in the House, at three o'clock in the morning, Palmerston scrambled up a wearying staircase to the ladies' gallery. The door of the ladies' gallery opened, Lady Palmerston came out, and they embraced. Disraeli commented on the event: "What pluck—to mount those dreadful stairs at three o'clock in the morning at eighty years of age!"

The other anecdote was supplied to Disraeli by Speaker Denison, and refers to Palmerston at the beginning of his last session. The Speaker advised a young man who had dined with Palmerston to make a memorandum in this fashion:

"Dined with the Prime Minister (Lord Palmerston) who was upwards of eighty years of age. He ate for dinner two plates of turtle soup; he was then served very amply to a plate of cod and oyster sauce; he then took a *pâté;* afterwards he was helped to two very greasy-looking entrées; he then despatched a plate of roast mutton; there then appeared before him the largest, and to my mind the hardest, slice of ham that ever figured on the table of a nobleman, yet it disappeared, just in time to answer the inquiry of his butler, 'Snipe, my lord, or pheasant?' He instantly replied 'Pheasant,' thus completing his ninth dish of meat at that meal."

The fact that Palmerston at eighty years of age struggled up a long flight of stairs at three in the morning to kiss Lady Palmerston gives no cause for surprise, because his and hers remains one of the great romances in history. Lady Palmerston was one of the most influential and honoured of Mary Anne's rivals in the political world.

Lady Palmerston had a grave and classic beauty and surely the loveliest mouth ever possessed by a woman. She was born Emily Mary Lamb in 1787, five years before Mary Anne, the only daughter of the first Viscount Melbourne. Her brother William, eight years older than she, became the Lord Melbourne to whom Caroline Norton used to wave from her little flat in Storey's Gate as he passed on his way to the House, who guided the infant footsteps of Queen Victoria in the way they should go with such charm and discretion.

Emily was brought up purely as a butterfly, to be charming,

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE (1809–1898), DISRAELI'S GREAT POLITICAL RIVAL

He married Catherine, elder daughter of Sir Stephen Glynne, Bt., and the marriage proved

graceful, attractive, and an ornament of the great world in which she moved. She learned to dance, to sing, to read aloud, to sew, and to write from her governess, and the art of listening and conversation from her father's friends who came to the house. For exercise she rode and hunted, walked, and danced. The waltz was just coming into fashion, to be cursed in verse as highly improper by Byron, of all people. He wrote that it did not leave much mystery for the marriage night.

She was fair, with blue eyes and a pink and white complexion, and very lovely.

Palmerston was not her first husband. In 1805, at the age of eighteen she married Earl Cowper. She was so beautiful and so brilliant that she became instantly one of the leaders of society in spite of her youth. She shared her throne with Lady Tankerville, Lady Jersey, and Lady Willoughby, who, between them, ruled with a rod of iron over Almack's, which was the haunt of all the most distinguished people of the period. They shouldered the responsibility of refusing admission to the Duke of Wellington, because he arrived after 11 p.m., and the Duke, a disciplinarian himself, went meekly away. Lady Cowper was a member of the committee, and they drew the line so firmly that in 1814, six only of the officers of the Foot Guards had the entrée to Almack's.

At the time Lord Palmerston figured largely as a man of fashion, and Lady Jersey and Lady Cowper approved of him greatly. Lady Cowper held a great attraction for him and they wrote letters to each other, chiefly on the subject of politics, for which Lady Cowper possessed an almost uncanny instinct. Lord Melbourne, her brother, at the height of his power, trusted her implicitly and asked her advice frequently. In those days women of Lady Cowper's type exercised a tremendous influence in politics, not directly, but indirectly through their charm, wit, and knowledge of the world.

She bore three children, a son and two daughters, of whom the elder, also called Emily, had a distressing talent for reciting. A number of men, particularly Lord Palmerston, admired Lady Cowper greatly, and it is not remarkable that she became, on occasion, the subject of gossip. Shortly after Lord Cowper's death in 1837, she and Lord Palmerston became engaged. They were married in 1839.

From this point we see a remarkable parallel between her life and Mary Anne's. At the time of her second marriage, Lady Palmerston was fifty-two, but, like Mary Anne, she had

remained youthful-looking and beautiful, and only, like Mary Anne, during her second marriage did her character and influence attain their full development.

She also fell and remained passionately in love with her second husband and concentrated all her thoughts and ambitions on him. Henceforward her one object in life was to further his political career, which she proceeded to do by the exercise of all her beauty and influence.

Like Mary Anne and Disraeli they were married lovers. She could not bear to be separated from him and always began her letters "My dearest love." She rejoiced when Palmerston became Prime Minister in 1855, an office he had never held before, but deplored the amount of time he was obliged to devote to ministerial business because she saw so little of him in consequence.

She and he remained perfect lovers to the end. She seems to have fulfilled all his needs in the way of companionship, at times even acting as his secretary, so that his friends remained few in number. Thus it is not surprising that he climbed up to the Ladies' Gallery at three a.m. in order to kiss her.

She survived him, and when he knew he was dying he made the greatest efforts to hide from her how ill he was, just as Mary Anne, when she knew she had cancer, concealed the fact from Disraeli.

Thus, in the Palmerstons, Mary Anne and her Dizzy faced a family combination as powerful as their own, with the additional advantage that Lady Palmerston came of a great family with immense political influence.

In the election of 1857 Cobden and Bright, among others, lost their seats, but Disraeli was returned unopposed. The country had survived the Crimean War, and was about to face the Indian Mutiny. The Princess Royal became engaged to Prince Frederick William of Prussia.

Disraeli occupied himself greatly with the Indian question. He condemned British policy in India, making pregnant remarks such as: "The rise and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. (It was alleged that new cartridges issued to native troops were greased with fat from cows and pigs, which would shock the religious susceptibilities of Mohammedans and Hindus.) Such results are occasioned by adequate causes and by an accumulation of adequate causes."

Gladstone, on the other hand, characteristically enough was lashing himself into a frenzy over the Divorce Bill. The Indian Mutiny did not interest him.

When the Session ended on August 28th, Mary Anne and Disraeli retired as usual to Hughenden for rest and refreshment. She engaged in the peaceful pursuits of the place. Disraeli also rusticated, except for occasional exertions such as addressing a farmers' dinner. Everyone considered that the Government must continue indefinitely and that no one could supplant Palmerston. Mary Anne reflected that her Dizzy was now fifty-three, and she sixty-five. Perhaps after all she would never hear him speak in Parliament because perhaps he was destined never to become Prime Minister and she had sworn either to hear him speak as Prime Minister or not at all. Then she remembered her original prophecy of long ago and laughed at her fears. She had taken her part in politics for too many years not to remember that in politics the unexpected always happens.

It happened early in 1858.

In spite of Disraeli's attacks, the Government of India Bill was read a first time on February 18th by a majority of 145. On the following night the second reading of the Conspiracy Bill was lost by a majority of 19, and Palmerston resigned.

Thus Mary Anne's Dizzy came back to office, for the Queen sent for Lord Derby.

As usual Lord Derby went out into the wilderness seeking members for his Government. Lord Grey and Gladstone refused his offer. Glancing through history it is odd how eminent politicians, statesmen, call them what you will, take up a purely personal standpoint in these crises. Their attitude is never: "What can I do for my country?" but "How will this affect myself?" Finally, Lord Derby formed his Government, the names of whose members look, as was usual at the period, like a page out of a peerage. The only untitled members were B. Disraeli (Chancellor of the Exchequer), J. W. Henley (President of the Board of Trade) and S. H. Walpole (Home Secretary). This was Lord Derby's second Cabinet.

The Court was pleased. So was Mary Anne.

The Conservative Government started life in a very delicate state of health. They were at the mercy of the House of Commons. They had no majority. Someone pointed this out to Disraeli, who inquired blandly where the majority was, and who had it? No one could tell him, so Derby's Government continued.

He stayed at Windsor Castle in April, writing thence affectionately to Mary Anne. The Queen was very gracious, the Prince also. One was in power again, even though tottering.

Disraeli, in his Budget, adopted a point of view which should endear him to all taxpayers. It was that income tax should not be retained permanently. He said:

> "The feeling of the community generally of the inequality, of the injustice, and of the odious nature of this tax, has unfortunately been sanctioned and concurred in by all those statesmen who have felt the necessity of levying it."

He therefore provided for the ultimate extinction of the tax by postponing redemption of debt. He also invented the device of a penny stamp on cheques which continued ever since until the stamp was increased to twopence.

Unfortunately, Mary Anne could not look forward to extended triumphs because the Conservative Government of 1858 was a sad Government. It had no majority and no power. It could originate nothing and must perforce lend a willing ear to everyone. Such Governments are not long-lived.

However, an act of supreme importance distinguished its tenure of office, namely, the taking over of the authority of the East India Company by the Secretary of State for India in Council. It also passed an act permitting Jews to enter Parliament.

The installation of Lord Stanley as Secretary of State for India led to a certain amount of friction with the Court. Disraeli managed, by the exercise of that influence he could always exert over other men when he chose, to induce a spirit of reasonableness and placate everyone. Thus Mary Anne was able to write to Mrs. Brydges Willyams that the Queen was all kindness to Dis.

About this time the old question of Reform cropped up once more, causing as usual endless quarrels and recriminations. It was far too complicated to consider in detail here, but Disraeli made a brilliant speech, enabling Mary Anne to write triumphantly about him to Mrs. Brydges Willyams. How that old lady must have licked her lips down in Torquay at receiving first-hand information from the wife of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to the Government's fortunes. Actually, no one liked Reform, a contentious, invidious affair bound to land its sponsors in unpopularity with some section of the community.

Disraeli, as usual, compromised and cajoled, reconciled people, and spoke brilliantly. In spite of all his efforts, on the second reading of the Reform Bill the Government was defeated. Thereupon Parliament was dissolved. Mary Anne's Dizzy was out in the cold again, but she wrote to Mrs. Brydges

Willyams insisting on the fact that the Government did not resign.

In the general election of 1859 Disraeli had great hopes, but the Conservative gains did not equal his anticipations. Meanwhile he was endeavouring to bring Derby and Palmerston together, but Palmerston refused to hear the voice of the charmer. No doubt Lady Palmerston, the sister of Lord Melbourne, a lady of the most acute political sagacity, had a voice in the matter, for both Palmerston and Melbourne sat at her feet and imbibed her wisdom. Lord Palmerston felt convinced that the elections would bring him to power even if no one else believed it. He wrote ever so politely, with almost cruel politeness in fact, to Disraeli, declining, so to speak, to touch pitch and be defiled.

Disraeli therefore looked in other directions for help, to no particular purpose. When Parliament met he spoke, and wrote to Mary Anne that it was the best speech of his life. It may have been, but in the result it made no difference. The Government were beaten by 13 votes and resigned. Palmerston was to be Prime Minister from 1859 till 1865.

It is tedious to follow the ups and downs of these successive Governments, and watch the Conservatives, when reform, so-called, is in their mind, bidding for a £10 franchise, the Liberals responding with a £9 franchise, the Conservatives coming back with an £8 or £7 franchise, and so on. Equally it was tedious to Mary Anne. She was getting rather an old lady, born in 1792, in the era of the French Revolution, which everyone had rather forgotten about. She was thirteen years old at the date of the Battle of Trafalgar, which everyone had forgotten about too. She married Wyndham Lewis in the Waterloo year, and now the Duke survived merely as a venerable relic, more or less deaf, a remarkable public figure, but not very executive. He moved slowly through drawing-rooms revered by all on account of old forgotten far-off things and battles long ago, merely ejaculating "Ha!" when spoken to. Mary Anne began definitely to belong to the Waterloo era, and a generation had arisen in the meantime which knew not Waterloo, just as a generation has arisen to-day which knew not the Great War. Yet just as to-day, the generation which knew the Great War prevails, so in Mary Anne's day the generation which knew Waterloo prevailed, but it was passing.

She felt that she was passing, and her Dizzy also, even if he remained her junior by twelve years. She could recall

politicians or statesmen of fame who had proved themselves in their early years, and yet her Dis had figured merely as Chancellor of the Exchequer in two declining Governments, and now, in 1859, he was fifty-five. Could her dreams ever come true, with Palmerston settled so firmly in office?

So many things had happened since she married him. Isaac was gone, and Maria, and now Sarah. Disraeli, speaking about the mystical affection of a sister, mourned her deeply. He lamented that she was his only sister, his first and ever-faithful friend. For Sarah it must have been to some extent a happy release. She had spent her life for others, and others had not done a very great deal for her. She went to her last home owed rather than owing.

Mary Anne, though ageing, continued her brave efforts. In 1860 the Queen reviewed the Volunteers in Hyde Park, and Mary Anne, whose house in Grosvenor Gate overlooked Hyde Park, invited seven hundred members of the *beau monde*. Where she put them all heaven alone knows, but it was a gallant gesture. Mary Anne must have kept the flag flying socially in those days, for we find Disraeli confessing to Mrs. Brydges Willyams that Mary Anne told him it was a brilliant social season, because he never went anywhere to see for himself.

The Prince Consort died in December, 1861. His was a tragedy of devotion to his adopted country and overwork. He visited Camberley to inspect the new buildings of the Staff College at Sandhurst, and proceeded thence to Cambridge to see the Prince of Wales, who was then in residence. On returning home he developed a chill, and his enfeebled constitution proved incapable of throwing it off. He told the Queen she was a good little wife, and died as inconspicuously as he had lived, leaving Victoria heart-broken. As so often happens she appreciated him far more in death than in life. It never occurred to her while he was alive that he overworked, but after his death she referred to him constantly as "my angel."

Before his death, in the early part of the year, Mary Anne had enjoyed a great triumph, being invited by the Queen to stay at Windsor in company with her Dizzy. Both she and he were enraptured. It was a very notable compliment on the part of Her Majesty to ask the wife of the leader of the Opposition to stay with her. Cabinet Ministers were asked frequently without their wives. Disraeli himself, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been invited to Windsor without Mary Anne.

This seems to form another example of Queen Victoria's

astounding common sense and gift of seeing below the surface where people were in question. There had been a time when she and the Prince Consort doubted the sincerity of Disraeli, but those days were over. They perceived him to be sincere, and the one thing Queen Victoria could not endure was a humbug. The visit of Mary Anne and Disraeli to Windsor created much stir, so that even Lord Derby inquired what happened, and Disraeli replied, a shade loftily one imagines, for Derby had tried his patience on more than one occasion, that they were very gracious and communicative.

Moreover, the Queen maintained a very high standard for wives, and by this time all the world knew Mary Anne as the perfect wife. The Queen approved. Again, Mary Anne had encountered social difficulties during her career as Disraeli's wife; various great ladies, My Lady This and My Lady That, looked down on her and considered her, with her demonstrative affection for a husband much younger than herself, a figure of fun. Much information reaches Royal ears from one source and another; the Queen invited Mary Anne to Windsor, and after that even a great lady must keep a still tongue, for it is hardly possible to criticise socially a lady on the Royal visiting list.

This kindness on the part of the Queen, Disraeli made up to her when her husband died. For the Prince he maintained a genuine admiration and expressed it over and over again to various people. On the Prince's death few understood so well as Disraeli the crushing blow which had fallen on the Queen. He possessed a remarkable insight into the feminine mind, a delicate chivalry in his attitude towards women, and above all imagination. He understood perfectly the loss to Queen and Country caused by Prince Albert's death, with the Queen writing mournfully to Palmerston that she would always remember her duty and her people, but that her worldly career was finished.

It was Disraeli's sympathetic attitude, and public tribute to the dead Prince which laid the foundation of Queen Victoria's lifelong friendship for Mary Anne and himself. The Queen in gratitude sent him her own copy of the Prince's speeches, bound in white vellum, with an inscription in her own handwriting.

At this period Mary Anne found London very gay because of entertainments in honour of the Prince of Wales's marriage with Princess Alexandra, "the sea-king's daughter from over the sea,"

as Tennyson observed in verses of felicitation. Seeing the Royal pair at their first evening party given on the return from the honeymoon, Disraeli remarked that they looked like a young couple in a fairy tale. Mary Anne went to most of the parties, including a magnificent ball given to the Princess of Wales by the Brigade of Guards.

A general election took place in 1865. Mary Anne's life seemed to be sign-posted by elections. Still in these latter days, when she was getting old and the prospects of her Dizzy's becoming Prime Minister seemed dimmer and yet more dim, elections did not give her a great deal of trouble. Once more Disraeli was returned unapposed, and Buckinghamshire sent two other Conservatives to Parliament besides himself. Gladstone, thrown out by Oxford Universty, fled to Lancashire and managed to win a seat in that county.

But even with Disraeli returned in triumph, the prospect for Mary Anne and for him looked singularly bleak. Palmerston was still in power, seated in the saddle with apparently unshakable firmness. The country had exactly the Parliament it appeared to want; on the one hand, Palmerston, with his reputation as Foreign Minister behind him, made the name of England respected abroad and kept the tribes of the European continent in their places. Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, could be trusted to husband the country's resources. He was the last man who, if asked, as Lord Melbourne was asked: "But will not the fund-holder suffer?" to reply genially: "Oh, of course!" Gladstone had not the slightest intention of letting the fund-holder suffer.

In the face of Palmerston and Gladstone sat the serried ranks of the Conservative Party, led by Disraeli, watching them as a cat watches a mouse. The country felt much gratified at this situation. No one could move very drastically in any direction, and the country after the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny wished, if possible, to be left in peace to get on with its fund-holding.

A little elevating correspondence occurred between Disraeli and Lord Derby at this epoch. Disraeli suggested politely that he and Derby had been associated for seventeen years and that Derby might like to hand over the leadership of the Party in the Commons to somebody else. Derby repudiated the suggestion with elegant expressions of gratitude and friendship.

This sounds very like a *ballon d'essai* of Disraeli's to test the feelings of Derby towards him. It seems incredible that

he should have become bored with politics or halting in ambition. True, he had reached the age of sixty-one, he had fought arduous battles all his life, and at sixty-one a man lacks the elasticity of the forties. But Mary Anne was seventy-three and she still kept her gay courage.

They left home after the election to go country-house visiting. Mary Anne enjoyed this form of entertainment, but Dizzy found it a mixed blessing. He met all the people he wanted to meet and could discuss privately all the whispers and rumours of that political world, but the gargantuan country-house meals afflicted him with indigestion. This fact induces a touch of sadness; it seemed a pathetic pass for a man who, in his youthful travels, had rhapsodised so about food, the fricasees of Belgium and the *olios* of Spain.

The Victorian manner of eating may have produced the giants of those days, but they paid the price of gianthood. It cannot be a mere coincidence that statesman after statesman suffered from gout, nor is there reason to suppose that the sufferers all drank heavily. The reasonable deduction is that they poisoned themselves with great masses of food, of which in their sedentary lives they had no real need. Memory fails to recall a contemporary statesman who suffers from gout, nor is it a prevalent disease at the present time. In days when an aged nobleman of eighty would eat nine courses of meat at a sitting, the incidence of gout is not altogether surprising.

In 1865, Palmerston died, Russell became Prime Minister, and the age of giants, so to speak, was ended. Parliamentary stalemate would cease and Mary Anne's and Dizzy's opportunity might arrive, for the spectre of Reform must inevitably rear its ghastly head once more, and over a Reform Bill anything might happen.

The whole gamut of Party excitements and urges and inhibitions now started all over again. Disraeli began a prophecy with: "If Johnny is the man," meaning Lord John Russell. Stanley frothed at the mouth. There were fifty Conservatives on the Whig side. Could anything useful be done about them? The old game of Party Party began without the slightest reference to the needs of the country. It is a quaint thought that politicians, playing their little, macabre games, are allowed to govern the mass of people.

Disraeli considered that Reform was a stunt pure and simple. Every Party would make a show of desiring it, and no Party would do anything about it, because to tie oneself to Reform meant

taking a definite line, and no Party wished to take a definite line. If one takes a definite line it means making enemies, and no Party wishes to make enemies. The ideal of politics is to keep the boat just moving without any wash which may annoy other people. The country and the populace at large are negligible. The Party and its fortunes are all that matters.

On March 12th, Gladstone brought in a Bill reducing the county franchise to £14, and the borough franchise to £7. Derby and Disraeli had made them £10 and £6. This is an excellent example of Parties bidding against one another for the approval of the electorate. The ethics of the thing are nothing, and the approval of the electorate everything, because on electorates Governments depend for their existence.

Naturally all sorts of explosions resulted. Derby, as usual, was incapacitated by gout. Disraeli decided to oppose the Bill. The merits of it were probably not considered. Tactically the thing was to oppose it, and so opposed it should be.

The second reading occupied a fortnight and all the great guns on either side fired broadsides. Disraeli intrigued as only he knew how. The victimisation of the population at the hands of political wire-pullers is incredible. The wire-pullers exist merely for their own benefit, and the population, who keep them, are less than the dust beneath their chariot wheels. It requires a peculiar type of mind to become a professional politician, and as such types of mind are rare, they dominate the country to all intents and purposes. This is unfortunate but true. The average honest man would not stay in politics for a fortnight. It is always a case of: "What would Black demand in the way of offices to support me?" or "With how much must I tempt White not to oppose me? He asks so much but is it impossible to fob him off for less?"

The delicacy and tact of Disraeli in his speech on Reform are almost incredible. He even put forward the claims of the working classes, knowing quite well that this was a safe move, because no one who was anyone, who exerted any influence that is, troubled his head about the working classes. They were impotent, so why consider them?

The second reading of this contentious Bill passed by a majority of five. Russell made up his mind to continue. The vanity of reformers is almost past praying for.

Out of the heat of the battle Disraeli wrote to Mary Anne that the thought of her comforted him, and that if necessary they could be happy without politics. Indeed they could have been, because all passion was past, they remained perfect friends,

and the attitude of one to the other from the feminine and masculine point of view created perfect harmony. Mary Anne's attitude was that if Dizzy obtained office so good, but Dizzy in or out of office was more desirable than any other man in the world. For his part, Disraeli wanted no one but Mary Anne. She understood him absolutely, made his home-life perfect, and assuaged those psychological crises which overcame him every so often. Each was essential to the other, both knew it, and rejoiced.

In the long run a certain Lord Dunkellin moved an amendment to the Reform Bill. Disraeli, in consequence, told Mary Anne that affairs looked pretty well. The noble lord's amendment was carried eventually by eleven votes and that ended Russell's Government. Mary Anne and her Dizzy were once more in the ascendant.

We can see thus the drama of Mary Anne's and Disraeli's lives. They depended largely on fortuitous political combinations in the House of Commons which passed or rejected Bills or amendments to Bills, not for any logical reason, but from the result of more or less temporary combinations of warring factions, passing jealousies, quarrels between political leaders, or some other chance occurrence. They lived the lives of gamblers and there was no stability of fame. Disraeli in the House of Commons followed politically the career of a professional backer on race-courses. He weighed up current form with an experienced brain, and acted accordingly. Mary Anne in the social world aided and abetted him.

Their lives at Hughenden and Grosvenor Gate where they entertained, their visits to town houses and country houses, were all bound up with this great gamble of politics which, if only the luck ran their way, could provide such ecstatic prizes. The luck so far never had run their way. All they could put to their credit was Disraeli's Chancellorship of the Exchequer in two fugitive Conservative Governments, and the steady patronage of Lord Derby. He, of course, knew very well in which direction his interests lay. He was a great nobleman in the days when great noblemen could exercise powerful influence, and he realised that no other man could control the House of Commons, either in power or in opposition, after the manner of Disraeli. When the inevitable swing of the pendulum took place, supposing it took place in Derby's day, Disraeli would be invaluable. Hence Derby's polite refusal of Disraeli's polite suggestion that he should give way to someone else. Naturally Disraeli, who knew his power, anticipated the refusal, but he could not be blamed for testing his influence over Derby in bad days so that he might know how to act should the fates prove favourable.

As had happened before, the Queen sent for Lord Derby. That was on June 27th, 1866, and his next action was to confer with Disraeli. Mary Anne sat in Grosvenor Gate a prey to the liveliest anticipation. None knew better than she the excitement, the jobbery, the hysteria, the shocks and disappointments of cabinet-making. Her mind flew back to those forlorn days when Peel was cabinet-making and left her Dizzy out in spite of their united pleas. Obviously her Dizzy would not be left out this time if Derby could form a Government, but could he?

Derby, as always, began by going outside his own Party, and failed as usual. In the end he returned to his Party and, thanks to Dizzy's work in the past, found it adequate to the occasion. At length Derby arranged his third cabinet. Like all the rest it looked like an extract from someone's peerage, baronetage, and knightage. There were in it exactly three plain misters: B. Disraeli (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Gathorne Hardy (President of the Poor Law Board) and S. H. Walpole (Home Secretary).

Mary Anne's Dizzy was in office once more, and this time with a fair wind in his favour.

Affairs in London, after the accession of the new Government, proved stormy. During the Reform riots the mob broke down the railings of Hyde Park near Marble Arch, so that Disraeli entertained some fears for the safety of Mary Anne at Grosvenor Gate. By this time he had appointed Montagu Corry, the young man who danced a breakdown and sang a song to amuse the girls at a country house, who afterwards became Lord Rowton, as his secretary. Corry sent reassuring messages about Grosvenor Gate and Mary Anne, adding the characteristic comment of Mary Anne, that the people seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. It would have taken a singularly vindictive mob to upset Mary Anne.

Reform, unfortunately, cropped up once more. By this time even the Queen was tired of the bickerings about it, and wished to have it settled. Naturally the greatest commotion invaded the senate. Lord Grey had an idea, which Disraeli characterised as the murmuring of children in a dream.

Geoffrey, fourteenth Earl of Derby, was a cross-looking nobleman with angry hair, an eagle's beak of a nose, an iron mouth, and quite unbelievable whiskers. His eyebrows met together in a fierce expression, and he had the air of always being in a bad temper. In spite of these handicaps he possessed a suave and felicitous style of writing, and was fond of translating Homer and also the French poets. The private hobbies of noblemen are

extensive and peculiar, and Lord Derby easily combined these essentially academic amusements with a passion for whist, billiards, and racing, and suffering from gout.

It is therefore not surprising that in the long run, like so many other eminent legislators, he turned his attention to Reform, thus giving Mary Anne's Dizzy the opportunity for a triumph. But for Derby to approach Reform had the same significance as if Moses on Mount Pisgah with the ten commandments written on tables of stone in his hands had addressed a group of sparrows. Derby was a great nobleman and Reform after all only affected common people.

Therefore he observed, almost with a patrician guffaw, if such a thing is possible, that of all hares to start, he did not know of a better than the extension to household suffrage coupled with plurality of voting.

We must observe here the metaphor about starting a hare, thus bringing in field sports, to which noblemen were partial. At any rate the suggestion put an end to the bidding of Liberal against Conservative for a £10 or £7 or £6 suffrage. They really rather resembled bookmakers on a race-course shouting the odds.

In the long run Derby and Disraeli agreed that the householder who paid rates was a suitable person to exercise the franchise. Much hung on this from Mary Anne's point of view.

The most remarkable mutterings and grumblings resulted. Disraeli introduced the subject of Reform in the House in February, 1867, after it had been referred to in the Queen's Speech, suggesting blandly that it was no longer a question which should make or break Governments, because all shades of political opinion desired reform, the only difficulty being that a unanimous opinion on what constituted Reform could not be discovered.

Gladstone remarked darkly that all this seemed to him distinctly vague.

The proposals of the Government, when revealed, seemed vaguer still, the Opposition objected, and the Queen expressed her fears about a settlement. Fratricidal quarrels occurred in the Conservative Party, and General Peel resigned, earning the dry comment from the Queen that the Reform Bill was more important than General Peel. Derby decided at last that his conditions for borough franchise were payment of rates and two years' residence.

Disraeli introduced the Bill into the House. He described it as having a broad popular basis. The middle classes would get a second vote from the twenty shillings direct taxation franchise.

Gladstone arose and smote the Bill. He wanted a lodger franchise.

Disraeli replied in one of the many finest speeches of his career, and the House passed the second reading of the Bill.

Gladstone continued his attack and put down amendments to the Bill. Disraeli, in a second speech, said frankly that Gladstone's aim was to obtain power once more. He remarked that Gladstone had had his innings, and this was merely a Party attack. The House realised the truth of this last thrust, perceived that Gladstone wished merely to wreck the Bill, and on a division the Government had a majority of 21.

Thereafter it was roses, roses all the way for Mary Anne's Dizzy. The Conservatives cheered and cheered again and rushed to shake Disraeli's hands. Gladstone, looking at the matter from his own point of view, considered the result to be as far as he was concerned, a smash, perhaps, without example. Disraeli merely smiled his inscrutable smile. Derby would be pleased when he knew. That grim eagle's beak of his would jut still more prominently, and the iron mouth soften into a grim smile. Reverting to Derby's metaphor they had indeed started a notable hare.

The Carlton Club being the spiritual home of the Conservative Party, it was only natural that Conservative members should repair thither, when the House rose, to celebrate their triumph. Disraeli went down to the club also, to be received with immense cheering. Everyone wanted him to stay and have supper there, but Disraeli, still inscrutable, shook his head. He had a reason which they would not understand. He knew Mary Anne would be waiting for him, his faithful Mary Anne who remained with him in the spirit throughout Gladstone's fulminations, and the stark, clearly reasoned reply he had made to Gladstone. The first division on the Reform Bill marked a definite advance towards the fulfilment of that ambition which once he expressed to Lord Melbourne. Mary Anne understood it well, this was her hour and he would go to her.

Therefore he left the Carlton Club and went on to Grosvenor Gate. As Mary Anne said afterwards to Mr. Kebbel, who tells the story, "Dizzy came home to me."

Mary Anne, anticipating that he would go home to her, had provided a raised pie from Fortnum & Mason's, and a bottle of champagne. Firm in her faith, she anticipated her Dizzy's triumph and provided the appropriate drink for a celebration supper.

She had her reward. Dizzy, tired and hungry, ate half the pie and drank all the champagne, and then said:

"Why, my dear, you are more like a mistress than a wife."

Mary Anne, a woman of the world, appreciated the compliment. That was why she repeated it to her friend.

The Bill passed its third reading in the Commons unopposed. It then went to the Lords, where the most ominous rumblings began to be heard. Noble lords viewed with horror and alarm the extension of the franchise. The awful word democracy was passed warningly from one whiskered nobleman to another.

Derby of the eagle's beak and iron mouth had not the slightest intention that Disraeli's matchless conduct of the Bill in the Commons should be brought to nought by any fatuous alterations in the Upper House. Therefore he addressed his followers in the Lords and even the Liberal opposition died fitfully away. As was his habit, Lord Derby then had gout, but for all that the Bill came to no harm in the Lords.

The story goes that when some Conservative complained to Derby about the provisions of the Bill, he replied: "Don't you see how we have dished the Whigs?"

Indeed the Whigs, or Liberals, were dished. They maintained a tradition of reform—they were always reforming or about to reform something or someone—and here a Conservative Government had stolen their thunder and passed a Reform Bill far more comprehensive than anything in their programme. The man who had made its passage possible was Mary Anne's Dizzy, and she rewarded him for it with her love, a raised pie, and a bottle of champagne.

After all the excitement of the Reform Bill, Disraeli made an expedition into Scotland, accompanied by Mary Anne. Naturally, he would not go anywhere without Mary Anne. They were tried and faithful companions, heroine and hero of a hundred vicissitudes.

Disraeli, accompanied by Mary Anne, said the right thing to his Scottish listeners. He talked to them straightforwardly about Reform. He achieved noble periods, as for instance:

> "In a progressive country change is constant; and the great question is, not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws, the traditions of the people, or in deference to abstract principles and arbitrary and general doctrines. The one is a national system; the other, to give it an epithet, a noble epithet which perhaps it may deserve, is a philosophic system."

GEOFFREY, FOURTEENTH EARL OF DERBY (1799–1869)

He formed three Conservative Governments, in each of which Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Finally he resigned owing to acute attacks of gout and Disraeli became Prime Minister

the least of his tasks was to guide the impetuous Stanley, Lord Derby's son, in the way he should go. Naval expenditure, or the desire of the Admiralty for naval expenditure, worried him and he contested the claims made for the construction of new ships with a certain amount of bitterness. Mary Anne and he were on the verge of fame, but they had not yet arrived. In the meanwhile pressure of work accumulated.

At last, on February 13th, 1868, Derby wrote frankly about his health. He referred to his frequent attacks of gout, and said that they would cause him to withdraw shortly from political life. He had told the Queen that he would like to retire into private life at the first convenient opportunity. In so many words he named Disraeli as his successor, adding that the Queen concurred.

Six days later he forecast his immediate resignation and once more insisted that Disraeli should succeed him in the leadership of the Party. Disraeli replied, with what candour no one can estimate, that he never wished to succeed Derby and had hoped they would retire together. It is difficult to reconcile this with his statement to Melbourne many years previously that his ambition was to be Prime Minister, and his assertion that moderate success never interested him. Hitherto only moderate success had come his way, but now his pathway to the stars lay open. Mary Anne, old and ill, should yet queen it as the wife of the First Minister of the Crown, and wear her new dignity with the gallant air which never deserted her even though she was sick and suffering.

Derby wrote to the Queen apologising for his retirement, which must necessarily cause her inconvenience, and definitely advised her to nominate Disraeli as his successor.

There was no doubt as to the course Her Majesty would take, because in January, Disraeli had been invited to Osborne, and General Grey, the Queen's Secretary, then told him that she would appoint him Prime Minister on Derby's resignation. This makes Disraeli's letter to Derby in February saying that he never contemplated nor desired the Premiership still more strange. The announcement by General Grey had something of the dramatic about it. As Colonel Grey he had opposed Disraeli at the Wycombe election when he stood on the portico of the Lion, and pointing to the lion's tail, declared that as a result of the poll Colonel Grey would be there. This prophecy, as we know, failed of fulfilment.

From Osborne, in January, he had written to Mary Anne: "all that I could wish and hope." Thus she knew at last that her dream would come true, and that before she died she

would see her Dizzy Prime Minister of England, and hear him speak in the House of Commons.

Disraeli wrote to thank the Queen, and she replied with the utmost kindness. After all he had always appreciated Albert, and besides she admired his devotion to duty and his sincerity, and liked his innovation of reporting to her the business of the House in amusing and happily phrased letters. Even Sovereigns can be dull at times and find the business of State a burden. Disraeli's reports greatly eclipsed in charm the dullness and formality of conventional despatches.

He went down to Osborne on February 27th, 1868, to kiss hands. He told Mary Anne that on meeting him the Queen had a very radiant face.

This for Mary Anne constituted an absolutely crashing triumph. She wrote ecstatically to Lady de Rothschild that by the time the letter reached her Dizzy would be Prime Minister of England. Dizzy borrowed the rooms of the Foreign Office from Stanley so that she could hold a reception. Downing Street, Disraeli explained, was too dingy for the purpose.

Therefore, Mary Anne gave her party at the Foreign Office. It rained and it sleeted, and still her guests arrived, not in single spies but in battalions. She looked ill and haggard, but she made her gesture in the face of the world. Dizzy was Prime Minister and she was his wife. To her party the proudest must love to be asked, and she asked them, and saw them there, knowing the party to be her swan-song. The Prince and Princess of Wales attended the function, and so did Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone. Mary Anne, ill as she was, could not escape a touch of satisfaction at seeing the Gladstones. How often had Mr. Gladstone called at Grosvenor Gate for the express purpose of seeing her and explaining away some brush with Dizzy in the House. Catherine Gladstone might be one of the Glynnes on the Plantagenet Roll, but obviously she misjudged the charm and the influence of a Mary Anne.

Disraeli remained Prime Minister for nine months. The names in his Cabinet, as usual, recalled an extract from a peerage, baronetage and knightage. The only commoners were B. Disraeli (First Lord of the Treasury), Gathorne Hardy (Home Secretary), G. Ward Hunt (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Henry J. L. Corry (First Lord of the Admiralty).

At that time Gladstone became leader of the Liberal Party, and he and Disraeli glared at one another across the House of Commons. Gladstone suffered, as usual, from an uprush of high moral tone. He disapproved thoroughly of Disraeli, con-

sidering him an adventurer and an opportunist. Mary Anne, of course, understood Gladstone extremely well. He was just an ordinary male man excusing his male mannishness through a variety of moral hoodoos. For some unfathomable reason Gladstone, a great vital physical personality with an outstanding brain, seemed to deplore physical vitality and took shelter behind the Church. Perhaps his father, serving as a lad in his grandfather's shop, acquired some sort of inferiority complex and passed it on to Gladstone. Odd that a man who had been birched at Eton should nourish an inferiority complex. Most of the booming of Gladstone, to which his contemporaries became so accustomed, represented merely the old custom of whistling in the dark.

It now became abundantly clear that the political protagonists of the future would be Gladstone, the Liberal leader, and Disraeli, the Conservative, Catherine, the daughter of immemorial Glynnes, against Mary Anne, whose father climbed into the Royal Navy through the hawse hole, fought under Sir John Jervis, and died on active service.

Disraeli's Government became heir to a sea of troubles, the evergreen Irish problem in particular. Gladstone wished to disestablish the Irish Church. He put down three resolutions on religious questions and an amendment by Stanley was lost by sixty votes. The Queen did not wish the Government to resign.

There was also the Abyssinian War, concerning which Disraeli concocted a purple sentence in which he described Napier as "leading the elephants of Asia, bearing the artillery of Europe, over African passes which might have startled the trapper and appalled the hunter of the Alps." It ended in the destruction of King Theodore's capital, whereupon the British force left Abyssinia.

The Queen's kindness to Disraeli and Mary Anne continued. She sent flowers to Mary Anne for Dizzy through Princess Christian, and Mary Anne replied suitably. The pen was the pen of Mary Anne, but the style that of Disraeli. Mary Anne would never have thought of writing that the perfume of the flowers was enhanced by the condescending hand of the sender.

The Queen thereupon sent Mr. Disraeli a few more flowers, and Mr. Disraeli presented the Queen with his novels. Things were getting on. That year the Queen published *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, and Disraeli coined a a phrase about "We authors, Ma'am."

In 1868 a general election took place. Gladstone, defeated in Lancashire, took refuge at Greenwich. The Liberal majority

in the late Parliament was doubled, and thereupon Disraeli's Government resigned. Mary Anne and he were out in the cold again.

Disraeli was now sixty-four and Mary Anne seventy-six. Considering the situation, he could not help asking himself whether the time had not arrived when he might retire gracefully from the burden and heat of the political fray, request the Sovereign to bestow on him the customary peerage, and resign the conduct of affairs to younger men. He saw Mary Anne's ambition and his own achieved; she had prophesied for him the highest position in the land, and he had made her words come true. To use his own expression, he had climbed to the top of the greasy pole. Now he was sliding down it again and none knew better than he what efforts would be necessary to reach the top once more.

No one could forecast accurately how long the Liberals might remain in power, seeing that they returned with an increased majority, and meanwhile Mary Anne, in failing health, was seventy-six. Surely the better course was to retire with his honours upon him and the title of my lady for Mary Anne. She was old, and he was getting old, and both longed for the green peace of Hughenden, rendered more stately by those honours it would be the Queen's pleasure to bestow. No longer need he control the impetuousness of Stanley, or read those authoritative, ever lugubrious letters which Lord Derby, though in retirement from active politics, had continued to write on every seasonable occasion. Of what use to persevere, since in the natural course of events Mary Anne could not live long enough to see him Prime Minister again?

Sixty-four! He cast his mind back over the vista of the years. They had been good years, and there would be more good years to come if he gave up the exhausting life of the House and conserved his energies. He could sweeten the declining days of Mary Anne with that loving care which meant so much to her; after all, without Mary Anne, the premiership could never have come within his grasp. It was she who, by arranging all the petty details of life, had left him free to exercise his genius in the political arena untrammelled by the necessity of taking thought for to-day and to-morrow. Now, with endless leisure, one could make all that up to Mary Anne. Moreover, there were still books to be written. The magic of the pen called him, the love of Mary Anne and the peace of Hughenden, so that almost he succumbed. Then, quietly but insistently, the voice of ambition spoke again.

If he gave up the struggle, who would reorganise the baffled Conservative Party? One by one he considered the members of his Cabinet, and smiled. Which of them possessed his flashing gift of words, his tactical genius, his power of persuasion, his irresistible influence over any man from whom he desired a certain course of conduct? He could not think of a single name with which to replace the magic of his own. At the moment Gladstone possessed the field, and must one really yield him the palm without contesting his position?

Then the voice of ambition set forth the most compelling argument. At the moment the Conservative Party seethed with dissatisfaction and blamed its leader's Reform Bill for the result of the elections. The least he could do was to remain at the head of the Party, restore the confidence of the rank and file, and lead it eventually to new victories. That meant remaining in the House of Commons and foregoing a peerage, but for all that Mary Anne should still become my lady. There was another, an even more graceful fashion in which honour could be conferred on her.

Accordingly, in November, 1868, Disraeli wrote to Queen Victoria explaining the course he wished to pursue. On mature consideration he did not think anyone but himself could, with equal convenience for Her Majesty, lead the Conservative Party. Supposing he had asked for a peerage on his own behalf the rank bestowed on him would have been that of Viscount. Dared he ask that, instead, Mrs. Disraeli might be created a peeress in her own right with the title of Viscountess Beaconsfield?

There could not have been devised a more charming epilogue to the long drama of Mary Anne than this ennoblement of a devoted and affectionate wife. Mr. Buckle, in the official Life, merely quotes Queen Victoria's reply to Disraeli agreeing gladly to his suggestion. According to Mr. Sykes the Queen first consulted her secretary, General Grey, who, as a Colonel, contested the Wycombe election successfully against Disraeli in 1832, and asked for his opinion in writing.

General Grey expressed certain doubts, but concluded that on the whole perhaps it would be better to comply with Mr. Disraeli's wishes.

Whichever account is the more accurate, no more charming letter from a Sovereign to a minister can ever have been written than Queen Victoria's to Disraeli, granting his desires on behalf of Mary Anne. His letter of thanks to the Queen showed in every word how deeply he was moved by her kindness.

Thus Mary Anne became the Lady of Hughenden not only

in her husband's graceful phrase, but in fact. With the unvarying sweetness of her nature she cherished no illusions about the reason for the honour bestowed on her. She admitted that it recognised Dizzy's services to the country and not hers, and still she felt very proud of a large "B" and the coronet of a Viscountess on her notepaper.

Otherwise life took on a certain tinge of sadness, because the ranks of those whom they knew were thinning. Jem died in 1868, leaving Disraeli five thousand pounds. Lord Derby died in the autumn of 1869. Their association had lasted for twenty years, and it is doubtful whether any other man but Disraeli could have preserved it unbroken by any clashes of temperament.

Mary Anne and her Dizzy were getting very old people now, and the disabilities of age continued to inconvenience them more and more. Mary Anne's last really great party was the one she had given in 1868 to celebrate Dizzy's accession to the premiership, when Stanley lent her the rooms of the Foreign Office for the occasion. In 1870 Disraeli himself was ill and complained that he had not felt well during the whole year. By 1871 he had recovered sufficiently to attack Gladstone so vigorously that Gladstone turned white with passion. It may have been the strain of literary composition that made Disraeli ill in 1870, because in the previous year, at the age of sixty-five, he had begun to write a novel, *Lothair*.

It has been said that he wrote *Lothair* to amuse Mary Anne because of her failing health, and was accustomed to read it to her as it progressed. In any case she would have been deeply interested because she called all his books her children, and one of such children had not been born for a great many years. Besides, the dedication to *Sybil* linked her forever with his writings.

It was all very political like the other novels, and *Lothair* became torn between three lovely ladies, Clare, Theodora, and Corisande. Disraeli was ever juicy as to the names of his characters, but Mary Anne, simply baptised, no doubt adored them.

Longmans published *Lothair* and it was the most successful of Mary Anne's fictional children. It sold in many thousands and quantities of editions, for everyone, both fashionable and unfashionable, wanted to read it. It also enjoyed widespread popularity in the United States of America. As is invariably the case when an established writer produces a best-seller, *Lothair* stimulated the sales of Disraeli's previous novels.

THE LAST PHASE

GOING down the hill of life Mary Anne could look back over the past and feel, in spite of her present sufferings and afflictions, that satisfaction which comes from a good life lived to the full. She had begun as a little girl in the heart of the West Country and lived to become the friend of kings and princes and a woman whom her Sovereign delighted to honour. She had become the loved wife of two husbands; the first was a good and honourable man, though his distinction in the minds of men arises solely from his association with his successor. The second had written her name and his own gloriously across the pages of history.

So, looking back, Mary Anne paid a brief tribute of memory to Wyndham Lewis, who had been good to her and faithful and affectionate, turned from him to the consideration of her Dizzy, and smiled.

It was a far cry to the day when, from her drawing-room window in Grosvenor Gate, she had seen him first on his return from the East driving in the Park with a lady. It was still a farther cry from the Dizzy of to-day to the Dizzy of that period. Gone were the marvellous waistcoats, the shoes with pompoms, the gold chains, the luxuriant curls, the dandiacal affectations, and the Mayfairish graces. Dizzy no longer ran the gauntlet of the drawing-rooms and discussed his novels with all the prettiest women in London. Nowadays he dressed in sober garments and the luxuriant curls were luxuriant no longer. He was even forced to dye the remaining curl on his brow.

But what a fight he had made, for how long, against what odds! Yet he had said once in his fiery youth that he loved a life of pleasure, idleness, and literary work, and only pride drove him on. Mary Anne knew it was more than pride. He had been born with the almost baneful conviction, which comes to some men, that great work in the world lay before him to be done, and that he might not escape his destiny. Nothing else could have induced him to declare to Lord Melbourne, as a young, untried man, that he wished to become Prime Minister.

"And what did I say of Dizzy at the time?" Mary Anne asked herself and recalled the words with difficulty out of the slow memory of old age. "Mark what I prophesy. Mr. Disraeli will in a very few years become one of the greatest men of his day." Women were not to be deceived, that is, not women like herself. She took one look at him and knew. Perhaps, after all, she had not shown such deep insight. It was merely that they were born for one another, and that instinctively, at the very first glance, she knew.

"And I," Mary Anne reflected with gentle pride, "have done my part. Who knows—without me even Dizzy might have failed!" and paused, almost horror-stricken at the sacrilegious thought that Dizzy could ever, in any circumstances, fail.

Indeed she had played her part gallantly. She had been faithful in small things, the trivial matters—but were they so trivial?—of every day, the cooking and housekeeping, the entertaining, the banishment of small irritating mischances at home or during their travels. Did they take a house in a foreign country, Mary Anne would see to the provision of a good cook. Did they stay in a hotel, no hotel-keeper should rob them as long as she had breath in her body. If he wished to go long walks she would walk with him, mile after mile, careless of the physical handicaps her sex and her additional twelve years laid upon her. If he quarrelled with Gladstone, such was her charm that Gladstone would come round to call at Grosvenor Gate and bury the hatchet.

"And he has been good to me," Mary Anne told herself. "I asked nothing very much, for I am only a woman, and I know perfectly how men think of women, but Dizzy has always given me love, comradeship, trust, and good manners. That, after all, from Dizzy, who could have and could have had almost any woman in the country, is saying a good deal. I must have been rather charming and attractive. I know I was rather charming and attractive, but how nice to think that Dizzy knows it too, and behaves accordingly."

Yet how could one doubt it? There were those walks at Bradenham in the days of old Isaac, whom one could only describe as a perfect darling, and Ralph, and Jem, and Sarah. It was pitiful about poor Sarah. Of course, Sarah had never understood men. She inherited the meek and sacrificial spirit from her mother, Maria Basevi, added to the sense of inferiority where men were concerned bred and trained into Jewish girls. Mary Anne smiled pityingly at the memory of Sarah. What fun,

in Sarah's place, Mary Anne would have had, given the possession of Disraeli as her brother.

"She was always serious," Mary Anne told herself, "and I've always been gay. I lived in the present and Sarah lived in the future. If you're a woman you can't afford to live in the future. No one knows anything about the future, but here we are in the present, and there's always something to be made of it. Besides, men don't like serious women. They love them to be gay and laughing and care-free. Men, too, are absorbed by the future, poor things. There wouldn't be much gaiety in life if it wasn't for women. They give parties for us, and we amuse them and make them laugh if we understand our business."

Being old, and out of the hunt, and yet adored by her Dizzy, she recognised almost with awe what fun it was to be a woman. What man, born in her circumstances, could have enjoyed so much fun as she? He would have had to work, poor thing, and justify his existence according to the exacting standards of men, whereas she had merely laughed her way through life and attracted two most satisfactory husbands, solely because of her looks and her charm, and a natural capacity to find everything amusing.

"And I shan't laugh much more," she decided. "I've come to the end of my fun and it's peculiarly sad for a woman to come to the end of her fun. Fortunately, if you've been a loved woman, you've heaped up a vast store of memories from the past. But remembered fun's hardly the same. If you don't meet with any more it means you've come to the end of life. It's terrible for a woman to come to the end of life. Still, I haven't very much more time left, and the only thing that distresses me is the thought of my darling Dizzy left alone. Who in the world will look after him when I'm gone, because left to himself he's just a baby."

Thereat Mary Anne smiled, because nothing flatters a woman so much as the reflection that a man in whom she is interested cannot get on without her, and, left to his own devices, remains just a baby.

In her last letter, found after she was dead, Mary Anne provided against Disraeli's remaining lonely out of faithfulness to her memory. In spite of that, lonely he remained. He had given everything worth giving to Mary Anne, and she had given him everything worth taking. How, after thirty years with her, could he contemplate living with anyone else?

These musings, or something very like them, must have occurred to Mary Anne in 1871 or thereabouts, because she knew herself to be stricken with a mortal disease.

Shortly before Disraeli became Prime Minister Mary Anne had had a hæmorrhage, and from then onwards she knew herself to be suffering from cancer, but she would never tell Dizzy. All the courage inherited from her father, Lieutenant John Evans, R.N., came to her aid. She knew instinctively that the next few years would be decisive in her Dizzy's career. A mere illness, some silly feminine weakness, must not be allowed to interfere with his life, nor must he be distracted by worry about her health. She must conceal from him the real cause of her illness, and continue as though nothing serious had happened. One did not fail one's man at the moment when he saw victory almost within his grasp.

What Mary Anne suffered during the last years of her life only she knew. Even the consolation of Disraeli's sympathy was denied her until the end approached, because, in response to her gallant gesture, he felt obliged to pretend that he knew nothing about the cancer, whereas actually he knew from the first, and his distress was very great. He could not bring himself to ignore this gesture from the greatness of Mary Anne's heart.

It is one of the more dramatic consolations of history that Mary Anne, stricken with a mortal disease, with but a few years to live, yet lived long enough to see her Dizzy become Prime Minister, even if only for nine months, realise the ambition of her life, see her prophecy fulfilled, and give a splendid entertainment in his honour at the Foreign Office rooms, with the Prince and Princess of Wales, the lovely Alexandra in the flower of her beauty, among her guests, though even then she could scarcely manage to drag herself about. If she had died without seeing her husband reach the highest position in the land it would have been a tragedy too deep for tears.

There are many historic anecdotes about Mary Anne; unfortunately some of them are unkind and endeavour to depict her as a social clodhopper, always saying the wrong thing or exposing her ignorance. It is more than likely that all the stories told against her owe their origin to jealousy. A careful study of Mary Anne reveals the fact that she possessed a natural wit and understood people most exactly. For humbugs of whatever rank she would have had little mercy, and in consequence she must have made a few enemies who, no doubt, carefully preserved any remarks of hers which perhaps she had better not have made. These people seem on the whole not to have shown a great deal of intelligence, because, Mary Anne being Mary

Anne, obviously she made the remark attributed to her in the Lord Hardinge story on purpose, with the idea of shocking a stuffy house-party into some semblance of human life.

Here is the story.

Mary Anne and Dizzy occupied the room next to Lord Hardinge's, and at breakfast on the first morning Mary Anne said to him:

"Oh, Lord Hardinge, I do think I'm the luckiest woman in the world. I told myself when I woke up this morning: 'Mary Anne, you are lucky! You've been sleeping between the greatest orator and the greatest soldier of the day!' "

Lady Hardinge is said not to have been amused, like Queen Victoria on another occasion. Probably Mary Anne did not mean her to be amused, but it is impossible to believe that Mary Anne spoke without thinking, and did not make her little speech deliberately.

Another story tells how Mary Anne complained, apparently in horror, of what she was pleased to call the indecent pictures on the walls of her hostess, and that she had stayed awake half the night trying to keep Dizzy from looking at the "Venus and Adonis" in their bedroom.

Can anyone imagine that Mary Anne would be shocked at a classical picture of a lady wearing only drapery and not very much of that, or that Dizzy would wish to lie awake all night looking at it? The intelligent reader will suspect here a quiet dig on Mary Anne's part at an ultra-respectable hostess.

The occasion on which she rebuked Prince Louis Napoleon, afterwards Napoleon III, is historic. Mary Anne had a charming frankness all her own, was no respecter of persons, and when someone annoyed her told him exactly what she thought, whether he was a prince or a postboy.

The Disraelis had gone down to see the Bulwers at Craven Cottage, but arriving late found that their host and the other guests had departed up the river in a steamer. Two gentlemen, one of whom was Prince Louis, arrived still later, and thereupon Prince Louis conceived a bright idea.

"I will get a boat," he said, "and row you down to meet the rest of the party."

It never occurred to Mary Anne to question the royal watermanship any more than it occurs to ladies nowadays when invited into a car to question the driving ability of their host. The prince obtained his boat and began to row. Presently, to avoid the wash of a steamer, he took the middle of the river and the

boat went aground on a mud bank. No efforts on the part of passengers and crew could get her off again.

It may have been the influence of Mary Anne's naval ancestry which aroused her wrath at the situation, or she may have been afraid of being swamped by the wash of passing steamers. At any rate, she turned on the Prince as her father might have turned on an incompetent midshipman.

"You should not undertake things you cannot accomplish," she said angrily. "You are always too adventurous, Sir. You ought to be more careful."

The Prince endured his scolding without a word. Years later, when he sat on the throne as Napoleon III, Mary Anne and Dizzy dined at the Tuileries with the Emperor and Empress, and Mary Anne reminded him of that day on the river when he nearly drowned her.

The Empress, listening, made her wifely comment.

"Just like him," she said drily.

Thus, in the spirit of her youth, Mary Anne went on bravely into old age. She was ill and suffering and refused to give in. At eighty she wore a scarlet tunic with a high neck and Disraeli's miniature on the left breast like a decoration. She liked gay colours, she possessed gay courage, and for her Dizzy meant the entire world. Therefore, she wore his miniature to proclaim the fact in the face of everyone. For as long as life remained she would continue to bring him happiness, ensure that so far as she could prevent it not one crumpled roseleaf should mar the comfort of his existence, love him and cherish him. After her death, she was afraid, poor Dizzy, with his hatred of domestic details, might find life very uncomfortable. He had better marry again and let some other woman look after him, but even then, inevitably he must miss the whole-souled devotion of his Mary Anne.

The true Mary Anne, to whom Disraeli once expressed his undying gratitude in a speech, because she had supported him by her counsel and consoled him by the sweetness of her mind and disposition, comes out in two other stories.

Once upon a time she drove to the House with him because he was about to make a great speech, and she wished to remain with him till the last possible moment in order to hearten him for the occasion. She would not enter the House and listen to the speech because of her vow never to hear him speak there until he became Prime Minister.

He stepped out of the carriage and closed the door. As he closed it he crushed her hand in the door, but she made neither

sound nor sign. She would have died in silent agony rather than distress him and possibly mar the effect of his speech.

The scene of the second story is a place on the way to a great country house. Mary Anne fell accidentally and cut her face very badly. When she arrived she said to her hostess:

"Dizzy is getting ready an important speech. If he knows I am hurt he will be in the depths of misery. Let me go up to my room, and tell him I have a headache. If you put me a long way from him at dinner he won't notice that anything is the matter because he has lost his eyeglass."

Mary Anne's hostess did as she was requested and not for two days did Disraeli discover the signs of Mary Anne's accident, but on discovering them he was so upset that he insisted on returning home at once.

She had an unending pride in her Dizzy and talked of him continually. She always expressed the greatest admiration for his looks. On one occasion the conversation among some other ladies and herself turned to the subject of men with good figures, and Mary Anne exclaimed with the greatest enthusiasm:

"Oh, but you ought to see my Dizzy in his bath!"

In the days when Disraeli was worked almost to death in the House of Commons an acquaintance told Mary Anne that he could not understand how Disraeli endured the strain, seeing that he dined late and ate hardly anything. (We must remember in this connection the Victorian passion for food.)

Mary Anne replied:

"Ah, but I always have supper ready for him when he comes home, and plenty of lights. Dizzy loves lights. Then he tells me everything that happened in the House, and I send him off to bed."

There would be no more of these spontaneous witticisms now, no more devoted care of her Dizzy because Mary Anne was an old lady of eighty, slipping quietly and unobtrusively away from life. It is almost unbearable to think of Mary Anne as old. She was so much more in character dancing at General Vernon-Graham's ball, where Wyndham Lewis saw and adored her, or walking with Disraeli through the grassy rides of Bradenham while he talked to her of love and she still hesitated; or on that joyous honeymoon in Paris whence she sent home Sarah the mysterious message about stays. Now death stalked her relentlessly and Mary Anne gathered all her remaining strength to evade the dread hunter. The pursuit lasted from May to December in the year 1872, and in December Mary Anne was bayed at last.

The story of her eightieth year is one of complete and sublime heroism on her part and utter devotion on the part of her husband. If anyone doubts that Disraeli was truly in love with Mary Anne, that person need only read the touching letters Disraeli wrote to her and about her during the year in which she died. He was himself sixty-eight and they had been together for thirty-three years. He knew at last to what an unbelievable extent he had depended on her. Now it was his turn, and never did a husband nurse and comfort a sick wife more tenderly.

Mary Anne was a strong woman with a sound constitution, and even at eighty she put up a great fight. Typically enough, her sense of humour never deserted her, and she could still make witty retorts, and laugh at her growing invalidism. For example, she went to a party in May and although illness obliged her to return home she said gleefully that no one at the party knew she was ill.

There began then all those consultations with doctors which distress a patient who knows her illness is mortal and tear the hearts of those who love her because they realise that all efforts of doctors will be vain and yet no effort must be spared to achieve the impossible and cure, or at any rate relieve, the sufferer.

Her doctor expressed the opinion that she had improved. He even allowed her to go to Court, but the effort proved too much for her; she was taken ill and obliged to leave the Palace.

The picture of Mary Anne at this time is sad, but her indomitable will and her fighting instinct give her a touch of splendour. The picture of Disraeli is heart-rending, since his was the dreadful task of looking on while a beloved woman suffered, with the knowledge that little could be done to relieve her sufferings.

Literally he did not know what to do. Sometimes he almost prayed that the end might be sudden because he found the spectacle of the long, slow death of Mary Anne more than he could bear. Death had come quickly to Isaac, and Sarah, and his brother. Why could not Mary Anne obtain a like mercy instead of lingering on in the midst of living death?

The only one who did not complain was Mary Anne. She possessed an immense will to live. She would fight death till her last breath and in the meantime lead her ordinary life to the greatest possible extent. She was not going to shut herself up and become an invalid. She proposed to continue her social duties with every ounce of strength that remained.

Her doctor approved of all this. A wise man, he knew that life depends not so much on the patient's physical condition as

on her desire to live. The mind may exert as powerful an influence over the body as the body's over the mind. It could not do Mary Anne any harm to go into society because nothing could do her any harm. On the other hand, the distraction might do her good. Unfortunately she experienced the most distressing weakness. In order to fulfil social engagements she was obliged to hoard like a miser her little store of strength.

Disraeli became very nearly distraught with anxiety. He could not bear to leave her for even the shortest time. He could not make up his mind whether she would be better at Hughenden or Grosvenor Gate and left the decision entirely to her. Finally they decided to go down to Hughenden for Whitsun.

Mary Anne understood perfectly well that there was no hope of recovery even in the beautiful air of Buckinghamshire, but Hughenden was Hughenden, their historic purchase when really they could scarcely afford it, that had made her Dizzy a country gentleman and salved the conscience of the Conservative Party which really could not accept as leader any other than a landowner. At Hughenden were all the flowers and the shrubs she had planted, the cuttings sent by old Mrs. Brydges Willyams, long since dead. Mary Anne was as old as Mrs. Willyams now, and Mary Anne also would soon be dead perhaps, but it did not do to think of such things.

She continued her grim fight for life with unabated courage. She always dressed as it were defiantly, in gay colours, and though she could only walk with difficulty, that did not prevent her from moving about the park.

She made her journeys in her little pony carriage, but the effort cost her a great deal of pain. Sometimes a servant pushed her about the grounds in an invalid chair. She still took the deepest interest in all her pets, her peacocks and her horses, and in the grounds she had laid out and the walks she had cut through the woods.

There were also recent and glorious memories which sweetened the pain of illness. Just before her serious attack in May she and Dizzy had received two magnificent demonstrations of their popularity among the people of the country. The first was in London and the second in Manchester.

In London they had gone in their carriage to the thanksgiving service at St. Paul's for the recovery of the Prince of Wales (after made Edward VII) from typhoid fever. As their carriage

cheered

Dizzy

might soon be Prime Minister, even though she could not live to see him once more at the head of the Queen's Government.

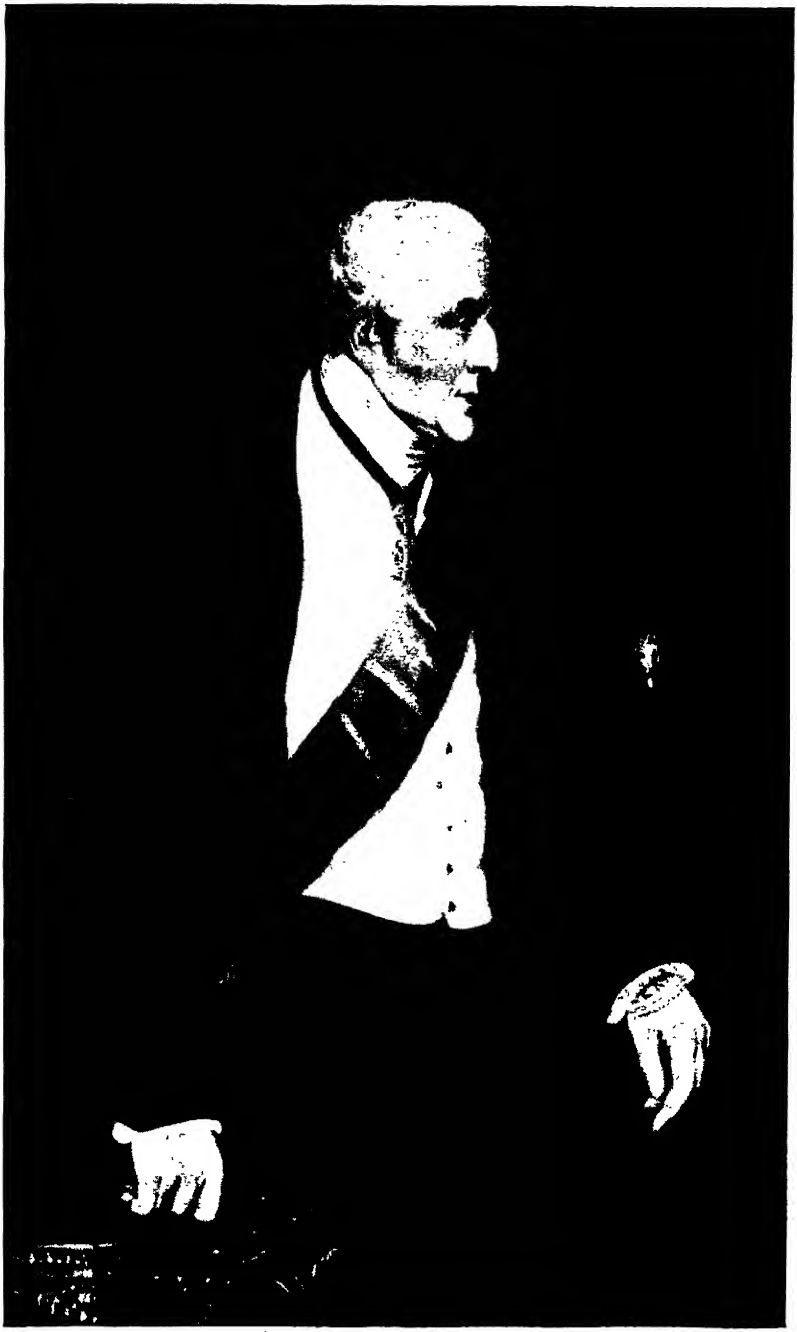
The second demonstration took place at Manchester in April, the month before she was taken seriously ill. Probably the strain and excitement of their Manchester visit hastened the beginning of her last illness, but she felt the effort to have been worth while. Representatives of over two hundred Conservative Associations passed by their carriage, and in the evening Dizzy had spoken in the Free Trade Hall. The speech lasted for more than three hours, and everyone hailed it as magnificent. Mary Anne sat in the gallery and from time to time her Dizzy glanced up at her.

Here at Hughenden she could look back on that wonderful meeting at Manchester with pride and thankfulness, but at Hughenden there was peace. The birds sang in the gardens and woods. She listened a little wistfully, knowing that when the birds sang next year there would be no Mary Anne to hear them.

The Whitsun recess drew to an end and it became time to return to London and Grosvenor Gate. Mary Anne gathered all her courage together and made the journey successfully. She was the wife of the Leader of the Opposition and had her duties to perform. She would perform them come what might.

So, bravely and pathetically, she did perform them. She still accepted invitations and appeared at parties, an old and tragic figure, her face marred by lines of illness and suffering. Disraeli went with her everywhere, overwhelmed with sadness, giving her the support of his arm and assisting her to place her faltering feet when it became necessary to mount or descend stairs. His heart was breaking and his courage, unlike that of Mary Anne, often faltered, but she insisted on going out, and her least wish nowadays was law. "Let her do as she likes," advised Sir William Gull, her doctor. "As long as she has the strength, to go out distracts her. She seems to have made an improvement. I advise all the amusement possible."

It was so different of course with the Gladstones. At this time (1872) Gladstone, at the age of sixty-three, in the full vigour of middle life, served Queen Victoria, who detested him, as First Minister of the Crown. Catherine Gladstone, aged sixty, had still twenty-eight years of life ahead of her, and she and her husband would celebrate the fiftieth year of their marriage in July, 1889. Their children clustered about them and they were firmly entrenched in Carlton House Terrace.



ARTHUR WELLESLEY, DUKE OF WELLINGTON (1769-1852)
In Disraeli's time he led the Tory Party in the House of Lords, and had become an almost legendary figure.

Poor Sir Stephen Glynne, Catherine's brother, had fallen on bad times in 1851. Although, following his passion for ecclesiastical architecture, he had made notes about 5530 churches, he was not very clever over money, and Gladstone, a wealthy man, felt bound to come to the rescue. He liquidated the debts on Hawarden, and afterwards Catherine and he used it as their country house. The year of Mary Anne's death found Catherine in the thick of her philanthropic work. She did not die till 1900; her last words were: "I must not be late for Church."

Considering their younger rivals in the political world, Mary Anne found no great cause to envy the Gladstones. She liked William very well; they had always remained firm friends and he would feel sorry when she died. And if Catherine possessed seven children to rise up and call her blessed (and there would have been eight if poor little Catherine Jessy had not died of meningitis), Mary Anne could console herself with the fact that her Dizzy was husband and child in one, and that she had always made him perfectly happy.

Therefore she continued to smile and go to parties until at last, on July 17th, at Lady Loudoun's house, she became so ill that she was obliged to return home.

That was poor Mary Anne's last party in any London house except her own.

Yet still in spite of everything the political struggle continued, and Mary Anne and her Dizzy remained in politics a very powerful combination. She was very old and very ill, he was old and frail, but the younger, more vital Gladstone-Catherine combination needed to reckon with them very carefully. Perhaps they did not reckon carefully enough.

Possibly the country had become a little bored with Gladstone, who stood so very persistently for righteousness, for with the average man a little righteousness goes a very long way. In the long and eventful career of Mary Anne and Disraeli professional righteousness had played a very small part. Indeed, Lord Salisbury, writing in the *Quarterly Review*, had gone so far as to describe Disraeli as a mere political gamester.

Mary Anne had been throughout her life an adventuress in the very nicest and most charming sense of the word, a divine and attractive creature, depending for the good things of this life on personality and an attractive manner. She could point to no long line of powerful ancestors, no exalted connections, no stately traditions, but she did better: she made her own traditions of charm, affection and faithfulness, and they endure to this day.

Consequently, she and her husband made a picture at which the great mass of the people could look with interest and a certain amount of fellow feeling; they stood for an ideal which is present in the minds of most young married couples, that of the husband and wife who pull together, help one another and get on. Gladstone stood for the abstract virtues, and these have a knack of becoming tiresome after a while. Mary Anne liked gay clothes and Catherine was habitually careless in her dress; Disraeli liked Burgundy, and champagne, and good food, and Gladstone liked chewing every mouthful thirty-two times. Disraeli, with his dyed curl plastered on his forehead, his pallor, and strange Oriental face, getting thin and hawk-like in his old age, like the face of an Arab *sheikh*, left an impression on the popular mind. Gladstone had nothing wherewith to impress the popular mind except his collars and a schoolmasterly habit of booming and scolding.

So, during Mary Anne's last year on earth, she and her Dizzy laid the foundations of her Dizzy's second triumph which she would never live to see. The Gladstone Government pursued its virtuous path to unpopularity. It put the War Office under Cardwell, who reorganised it and reformed Queen Victoria's army. Commissions could no longer be bought, and the War Office even managed to control the Commander-in-Chief H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, probably the bravest deed a Government department ever did.

The Government also performed other acts which annoyed a great many people. Quite naturally their army reforms made their name stink in the nostrils of the aristocracy, for if a nobleman or a gentleman could no longer purchase a commission but must sit for an examination like any clerk, what indeed was the world coming to? Beyond that the Nonconformists hated the Federation Act, a Licensing Act had annoyed both drinkers and purveyors of drink, and even Gladstone's chief preoccupation, the Church, turned against him for abolishing the University Tests. It is strange to reflect how much better Disraeli, not a professionally righteous statesman, understood the Church than Gladstone. Moreover, Gladstone managed also to get on the wrong side of the new democracy by means of a clause in a Trade Union Act.

Thus he had estranged all the politically important sections of the population: the religious, either established or non-conforming, the licensed trade, their patrons, the working classes and society. This was a formidable indictment against a Party

leader. These sins against political tact went far to prepare the way for Disraeli's return to power in 1874, when alas! Mary Anne no longer able to rejoice in his glory, would be sleeping quietly beside Mrs. Brydges Willyams in the vault in Hughenden churchyard where, eventually, Disraeli was to join them.

Lothair did a great deal to popularise Mary Anne and Disraeli with the masses, for no ex-Prime Minister of England had ever before written a best-selling novel, and when perfumes and race-horses were named after characters in *Lothair* the fame of the book spread to the humblest quarters. Betting is a democratic vice, and when Baron Meyer de Rothschild's "Corisande," christened after a lovely lady in *Lothair*, won the Cesarewitch, many an obscure punter must have blessed Disraeli's name which lured the punter in question to put his modest shilling on "Corisande" because of her association with the great man.

The aristocrats of the Conservative Party, on the other hand, began to doubt the wisdom of being led by a Jewish writer of fiction. It was all very well in the days of Lord Derby, now dead. Lord Derby had lent decency to the Party while Disraeli contributed merely his loathsome brains, some essentially vile cunning which one found in lawyers, bankers, and common people of that kind, to which no nobleman, or gentleman, would wish to lay claim. To have the Party led by such a person as Disraeli, especially after the defeat of his ministry, seemed more than noble Conservatives could bear. After all, a lord was a lord, you went for breed in dogs, horses, and men, and Derby's son had succeeded him. Far better to pin the faith of the Conservative Party to the new Lord Derby, and depend on the axiom that blood will tell.

Unfortunately for them and fortunately for the Party, noble Conservatives had no ideas. Their feudal minds harked back exclusively to the days when a lord was a lord and a labourer merely a serf. They could not envisage a situation when a labourer was the peer of a lord in the sight of the ballot box. Truly it is an odd situation, for on form the lord, from birth and training, might be the better man and entitled consequently to two votes, but unfortunately the second generation of a distinguished family is apt to be negligible. In any case, Disraeli's and Derby's Reform Bill had let the masses into the political orchard, and nothing in future could ever keep them out. It was useless for noble lords to rave. The day of noble lords was passing, and Disraeli knew it.

The keynote of the early and middle nineteenth century is the

disappearance of privilege and the coming into his own of the common taxpayer. The process has continued ever since. This note Mary Anne and Disraeli could hear more acutely than their political rivals, because they had not been anæsthetised by hereditary wealth and place. They had always needed to work for their results, she after her fashion and he after his. No one could imagine a Lord Derby or a Lord Stanley working for his results. They considered the country their stamping ground by right of birth. The only noble lord of the period who worked for results was poor Lord George Bentinck, who gave up horse-racing in order to devote his life to politics, and was killed by the unusual mental effort and the stuffy atmosphere of the House of Commons, he having always led an open-air life.

Mary Anne and her Dizzy realised that the old dominion of place and privilege was passing, and that in the new era that dawned the common man would speak the last word in the matter of policy. He might be stupid and unintelligent, but the veriest fool who can put a cross on a voting paper is as important in an election as the greatest man in the land.

Disraeli had always kept at heart the interests of the working classes ever since the days when first he stood for Wycombe as a Radical. In 1872 at the Crystal Palace banquet he declared that the Conservative Party had three objects: to maintain our institutions, to uphold the Empire, and to elevate the condition of the people.

More than that, no other statesman, noble or otherwise, who preceded him, ever gave the common man credit for as lofty ideals as the noblest lord among them all. Disraeli declared that his Reform Act of 1867 depended on the fact that the working classes, too, had their pride in their country and wished to preserve its greatness, and not only the greatness of their country, but that of the Empire.

After all, why not? Common soldiers had bled and died for the Empire. Even Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, who celebrated Catherine Gladstone's wedding in rather pitiful doggerel, had written a poem about a private of the Buffs (the East Kent Regiment) who preferred to be executed by the Chinese rather than disgrace his Regiment, as he thought, by performing the *Kowtow*.

At that time and in that speech, with Mary Anne listening entranced, an old lady of eighty, Disraeli laid down an Imperial policy which, had it been put into effect, would have altered the whole course of Imperial history.

Applauding self-government for the Colonies (now known as the Dominions Overseas), then a new idea, he said:

"But self-government, in my opinion, when it was conceded, ought to have been conceded as part of a great policy of Imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied by an Imperial tariff, by securities for the people of England for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands which belonged to the Sovereign as their trustee, and by a military code which should have precisely defined the means and responsibilities by which the Colonies should be defended, and by which, if necessary, this country should call for aid from the Colonies themselves. It ought, further, to have been accompanied by the institution of some representative council in the metropolis which would have brought the Colonies into constant and continuous relations with the Home Government. All this, however, was omitted because those who advised that policy —and I believe their convictions were sincere—looked upon the Colonies of England, looked even upon our connection with India as a burden upon this country; viewing everything in a financial aspect, and totally passing by those moral and political considerations which make nations great, and by the influence of which alone men are distinguished from animals."

He declared, moreover, his confidence that the working classes were just as proud of belonging to a great country and of maintaining its greatness as any other class, and that they wished to maintain the Empire.

Mary Anne, listening in the twilight of her doom, thought how amazingly clever her Dizzy was. No one had ever talked to the working classes like this before. Dizzy had enfranchised the householder by his Reform Bill of 1867 and now he proceeded to woo the householder. The official Conservative Party might consider throwing Dizzy over, but by the time they had made up their minds to do so the official Party leaders would be merely the grin without the cat, and Dizzy would have all the new voters voting in the Conservative interest purely out of enthusiasm for himself.

Besides, Dizzy could afford to ignore the noble ex-ministers, because he had set up a Conservative Central Office in Whitehall which fostered local Conservative Associations all over the country, who would choose candidates in the event of an election. Consequently noble ex-ministers had ceased to matter a great deal. The Conservative idea was being propagated, with

Oriental cunning, among the new class of voters, Disraeli had built up an entirely personal following and become a symbol and a figure-head. Also, Mary Anne reflected, her Dizzy said such lovely things that no one could help following him. For instance:

> "As I sat opposite the Treasury bench the ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of extinct volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea."

Poor Mary Ann, she admired him and loved him so, and she knew she had to die and leave him.

She suffered from cancer of the stomach, and so it became almost impossible for her to eat. Thence arose her great weakness, because without food she found herself quite unable to maintain her strength. All her friends were very kind and sympathetic. Many of them sent her presents of game to tempt her appetite. Sometimes she could eat and at others food nauseated her. For the most part she ate almost nothing, so that Disraeli marvelled how she remained alive and in good spirits.

She remained alive because life meant so much to her. She had had eighty years of life, and would have loved to enjoy eight more decades in this fascinating world, for she looked upon the world as fascinating. The tragedy of poor Mary Anne as she pursued her living death was that still, as she confessed years before, when first she married her Dizzy, everything interested her, and she moved among such exciting events, and she would have to leave them all.

She hated politics in the abstract, but inasmuch as they affected her beloved, they attracted her, and with the instinct born of experience she could sense the turn of the tide and feel convinced that her Dizzy before long would enjoy an opportunity to exhibit his true greatness, not in a nine months' premiership during which he led a tottering Government, but in absolute power so that, even late in life, he could exploit to the utmost that breadth of view, knowledge of men, historic sense, and Oriental wisdom, because, as she knew quite well, all Dizzy's wisdom derived from the East. He was one with David and Solomon; he had the ruthlessness and, above all, the subtlety which the East confers on her sons. Never would one

detect him brutalising a situation, because he possessed a suave and velvety method of handling people, but underneath it all ran the strength of steel, the thin sure steel of a dagger that slides imperceptibly between the victim's shoulder-blades and gives him his death almost without a sigh.

If only she had been born ten or twelve years later life might have become so much more wonderful. She and Dizzy had loved greatly, but it would have seemed marvellous to have loved Dizzy in the time of his flashing youth, in those days when Henrietta loved him. But then no woman would ever have held Dizzy by the charm of the flesh, or even under the spell of emotion. From a woman he wanted nothing that compelled him. Submission on his part to the charm of the flesh would give her too much power over him, and Dizzy had a terror of constraint. In many ways he reproduced the symptoms of a frightened child. It seemed queer that a man who could face the jeers and cat-calls and animal noises of a hostile Parliament without a tremor feared the silken ties with which a woman binds the man who evokes her passion.

Even in her weakness Mary Anne smiled. How strange that, lovely as she had been, attractive as she had been, throughout her life the splendours of passion had passed her by. Did women really love to inspire passion in men? How could she tell who had never inspired it? When Wyndham married her she was twenty-three and he thirty-five. A girl of twenty-three seldom falls passionately in love with a man of thirty-five. Passion results from a divine flame leaping from youth to youth, or from the more mature to the more mature, but reciprocal passion between a man and a woman separated by a gap of twelve years is almost past praying for. Physically they may be at one, but mentally they are for ever divided.

So with Wyndham she had missed passion, or rather she had not experienced it. She could not say herself that she had missed it. Mary Anne, except that she was capable of unswerving affection, did not indulge in deep emotions. She had always wanted to be gay and happy, and passion has little to do with gaiety and happiness. One had only to look at the Bulwers to be sure of that. Theirs had been a marriage of passion, and the trail of its wreckage led from Hertford Street to Italy and back again to England.

It occurred to Mary Anne, now that she was about to die, that she had displayed supreme art in living, for wisdom had been vouchsafed her to love lightly in her first marriage and

seek happiness, and in her second marriage to think nothing of herself and everything of her Dizzy because he represented sheer genius, and it is not given to a woman once in a thousand years to be the happy bride of a man who illumines his generation as a meteor streams across the heavens.

True, she had not borne children, but was that after all so very vital in a woman's life? Resting on her couch in Grosvenor Gate, unable to eat, unable to participate in the dear, laughing, irresponsible life of the London drawing-rooms where she had played her part for so many years and would play it no more, she decided that to seem worth while life must be creative and constructive, but not necessarily creative in the way of maternity. There were other ways of being creative, and some of those ways she had found.

All her life with her Dizzy had been creative in a fashion unknown to mothers. She could tell herself humbly and thankfully that without her Dizzy's career would have failed merely because he needed her so to take care of him. Dizzy was not possessed of Gladstone's iron physique. Gladstone was a Scotsman and Dizzy derived, as he had once written, from the shores of the Mediterranean. He was brilliant and exotic where Gladstone was sound and sombre, but at times he flagged, and seemed likely almost to die unless someone who loved him cared for him, and coaxed away the black humours, and made him laugh, and taught him once more that life was just a game to be played with zest but not mourned over, and wept over, and accepted with complete melancholy.

If she had become the mother of Dizzy's child, what would it have availed them? Except for a miracle the child could never have been another Dizzy. The child would only have separated her from Dizzy, and Mary Anne's sole idea of hell was being separated from Dizzy. She did not imagine herself giving birth to a genius, for genius flowers rarely. One had only to look at Jem, and Ralph, and Sarah, or even at Isaac, and compare them with Dizzy to realise that. The rest of his family should have gone on their knees to him. Sarah did of course after her fashion —poor Sarah, so meek and self-effacing, who never understood men, or realised the joyousness of being sought after and admired.

Looking back over the years from her couch in Grosvenor Gate, Mary Anne told herself that she had been very lucky. Many women had sacrificed themselves for men in vain, but she had not sacrificed herself for Dizzy in vain. No woman ever lived with a more understanding husband.

He wrote such wonderful letters and said such wonderful things. He always composed verses for her on her wedding-day. He trusted her completely and took her entirely into his confidence. Mary Anne remembered proudly that she had never betrayed a confidence. Dizzy might have described her as a flirt and a rattle before he knew her, but he understood her better now. No one recognised more swiftly than he the priceless worth of a faithful heart. Once George Smythe had asked Dizzy how he could put up with Mary Anne, and Dizzy had fixed George Smythe with a cold eye.

"I only possess one quality in which most men are lacking: gratitude," Dizzy had replied in the voice with which at need he flayed the Treasury bench, and George Smythe subsided.

In their early days together there had been times when Mary Anne, with all her gay courage, felt herself more or less of an outcast. The Lady Palmerstons and their kind seemed so unutterably remote and hostile, and destroying. Dizzy faced these situations with that massive contempt he showed for all the tricks of society, that contempt which in his youth caused him to dine in the Mess at Malta in fancy dress. He knew that if you accepted a snub you were crushed for ever, and that the only reply to a snub is a piece of studied insolence. Now she was accepted in all the drawing-rooms in London, and in all those drawing-rooms known quite unaffectedly as Mary Anne.

The explanation is very simple. Even at eighty, old, ill, and dying, Mary Anne remained merely a baby, the utterly delightful woman of West-country charm for whom any man worthy of the name would do anything in the wide world. Moreover, she had a simplicity of goodness, and goodness and Mary Anne are indissolubly allied, which won the hearts eventually even of My Lady This and My Lady That. No human being with eyes to see and emotions to perceive could deny the goodness and simplicity of Mary Anne, using the word simplicity in its true meaning which implies a single-hearted person as opposed to a double dealer.

That was why, at her last great party on the occasion of Dizzy's elevation to the premiership, the Prince of Wales so willingly and kindly gave her his arm. That was why Queen Victoria asked her to Windsor when Dizzy was merely Leader of the Opposition. That was why, to do him justice, for he possessed a heart in spite of all his austere and rather professional morality, Gladstone was her friend. Underneath all his tiresome virtues Gladstone had a solid Scottish appreciation for a true-hearted woman, and he knew he saw a true-hearted woman in Mary Anne.

Hers is one of the most beautiful stories of which the record stands, because she was good, and faithful, her days were long in the land, she wrought diligently, and had her reward. Some consider the spectacle of her Foreign Office party pathetic because she was old, and Disraeli was elderly, and she knew she had cancer though she kept the knowledge from him, but that view is mistaken. At her party, however she might have appeared physically, Mary Anne was just a girl in love, rejoicing with shining eyes and parted lips in the prowess of her lover.

There are so many stories in real life dramatically imperfect, but Mary Anne's was dramatically perfect. She shared with her Dizzy the burden and heat of the day, but she lived long enough to watch him enjoy his triumph and could say in all thankfulness: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." All who love her—and who could help loving her?—must regret that she did not survive until her Dizzy became Prime Minister from 1874 to 1880, but given the difference between their ages that was too much to expect. She saw him occupy the highest position open to a subject, heard him speak in the House of Commons, and died content.

If any tribute is needed to Mary Anne's essential goodness and simplicity of heart, and none is, for they were a matter of common knowledge, it lies in the fact that a careful search of all the available information about her reveals no single instance of jealousy against her on the part of any man or woman. General Grey, Queen Victoria's secretary, a crusted old courtier, feared lest the creating of her a Viscountess in her own right might bring ridicule on her, but it brought nothing of the kind. Everyone loved to see her so happy with the initial "B" and a coronet surmounting it on her note-paper.

This charming compliment paid her by the Sovereign is another of the dramatic perfections of Mary Anne's life story. The impetus came from her dear Dizzy on relinquishing office. He might have requested a peerage for himself, but instead he requested it for her. True, he wanted to remain in the House of Commons instead of going to the Lords, but it was a little unusual to ask for a peerage for Mary Anne—unusual, but not unheard of. Not the least delightful of Disraeli's letters is that in which he asked the Queen to make Mary Anne a viscountess, quoting delicately the precedents, in case Her Majesty might be in a mood to refuse. Actually Her Majesty was not. All her sympathies lay with good wives. Just as she invited Catherine Gladstone to bring her children to Buckingham Palace that they

might play with her own, so Queen Victoria acquainted herself, through the many available channels of Mary Anne's devotion to Disraeli. It is typical of Queen Victoria that the everyday virtues counted more in her opinion than more exotic gifts. In all her letters her invariable adjectives for people she esteemed are "good," "excellent," and Mary Anne was both good and excellent.

Beyond all we must salute Mary Anne's courage. She was twelve years older than Disraeli. Twelve years meant a great deal at the time of their marriage, forty-seven as against thirty-five, but much more when he reached the age of sixty and she was seventy-two. In spite of this handicap of the years Mary Anne still comforted and mothered him. One would be tempted to despise Disraeli for accepting all this from her except that it was the essence of the contract. Some woman must have mothered and comforted him, and Mary Anne would rather have died than let any other woman do it. Disraeli could not have existed unless Mary Anne, or some other woman, smoothed out all his domestic troubles and left him mentally free to follow his destiny. It was Mary Anne's glory that she smoothed out his domestic troubles, and no other woman.

They lived so happily together because they formed the exact complement of each other. Disraeli wanted absolute comfort and freedom from the cares of every day, and Mary Anne loved the excitement of political ups and downs, inside information, Carlton Club gossip, and to hear what Lord Derby, when he lived, really proposed to do, and learn the Queen's attitude towards this decision or that. She was interested in everything, but she loved to know everything in order that she might be interested. Disraeli let her keep her finger on the pulse of events because he perceived her discretion to be absolute and that the most dangerous secret was safe with her.

It is a fascinating task to try and penetrate through all the mists of history to the true personalities of Mary Anne and Disraeli. Mary Anne appears the less mysterious because we see in her a faithful, affectionate woman, a love-girl from the West with all the West-country girl's understanding of men. Disraeli provides a more complex problem.

André Maurois in his biography writes of him:

> "Disraeli had exasperated more men than one in the course of his life, but women he had found indulgent. His horror of abstract reasoning, his old-world courtesy, the imperceptible undercurrent of cynicism, his consciously flowery phrases—he had everything in him to attract women. And they inspired

him with a sentiment that was not sensual love, but rather a tenderness both humble and superior, a gentle and hidden fraternity of spirit. He liked their obstinacy, their ignorance, their ingenuousness."

This is a penetrating analysis, but it hardly explains Disraeli's success with women. True, they inspired him with a sentiment that was not sensual love. As we know, he delighted in flowers, and in many respects women resemble flowers. They are graceful, fragrant, charming to the eye and have a delicately sentimental significance. But the great appeal of Disraeli to women must have been that he was eternally kind. A woman will barter almost anything for consistent and perpetual kindness. Disraeli had a very accurate though probably not a very sentimental understanding of women's natural disabilities. He knew that if beautiful they faded early, if intelligent their brains could never equal those of the most brilliant men, that men sought their society for amusement, but did not take them very seriously, that, in short, a woman's is on the whole a lonely existence.

As he explained to George Smythe, his cardinal virtue was gratitude, and he always repaid a kind action. Women had done much for him, and so he was prepared, partly out of gratitude, largely from natural instinct, always to be kind to women. This kindness endeared him to Queen Victoria, a lonely figure on the colossal throne of an Empire on which the sun never set, whose Angel mouldered in the grave, who once wrote so pathetically about her somewhat ancient birthday. It endeared him still more to Mary Anne.

She appreciated his kindness not because on the whole people in her life had behaved unkindly to her, but because her Dizzy was the greatest man in the world and kindness from him honoured her like an accolade. Throughout their lives he showed her unalterable kindness. There may have been times when she annoyed him, but not one sentence in any of his letters to her or about her implies anything but kindness. Besides, to Mary Anne he behaved always in the manner of a courtier to a queen, both in public and in private. It may have resulted from a slightly Eastern excessiveness—the faintest residue of what the Mess at Malta called "that damned bumptious Jew-boy"—but even the nicest woman likes a little exaggeration of compliments. Disraeli always exaggerated his compliments to women, and they all loved the procedure, but Mary Anne loved it most of all.

He was, if the truth must be told, her darling, her baby, and her husband all in one. She did everything for him, even to

cutting his hair, and probably dyeing it as well. True, he made her the Lady of Hughenden, but her house at Grosvenor Gate was his first real home, and always his Town house until she died, and he was obliged to remove to a hotel. To Mary Anne the charm about her marriage was that not only did her Dizzy love her, and no one can deny that he loved her, because evidence to the contrary is so strong, but that she was necessary to him. There exists no woman who loves a particular man but longs to be necessary to him, so that she need not consider herself just a plaything but the one woman in his life.

The knowledge that truly she was the one woman in his life made up to Mary Anne for all her loving-kindness on Disraeli's behalf, not that she wanted any return, because she was a giving woman, but because there is no woman but likes to be exclusive where the man she loves is concerned. He reassured her on this point over and over again. He even insisted on it after she was dead.

And so, during Mary Anne's slow decline to the grave during the year 1872, the perpetual testimony of her husband that he loved her and would never leave her save under the compulsion of State affairs comforted and consoled her. It was true, as she had always known, only a woman longs to be reassured even unto seventy times seven, that he loved her. He had not, as she told him sometimes laughingly—it was a little family joke—married her for her money. She was his own dear Mary Anne, and he organised the Conservative Party with a breaking heart because she would never feel well any more, or walk with him light-heartedly through the woods of Hughenden, or attend with him any London function. Mary Anne had done her work in the world and it only remained for her to die. He could do nothing to prevent her death and what was the use of being Prime Minister of England if he could not stretch out a hand to save the only woman in the world he had ever loved?

The great statesman became entirely the slave of this little old woman with death written on her face who yet maintained, as often as she could, her old-time gaiety. Mary Anne developed a habit of disappearing during her bad times, and reappearing when she felt better. In this fashion she managed to preserve her charm and, what was more important, her self-respect. A woman hates people, particularly the man she loves, to see her when she is ill, because illness often takes on forms which break down all the pitiful pretences that human beings always remain delicate and picturesque creatures. Mary Anne hid a great

many of her sufferings from her Dizzy, and when she saw him made intense efforts to supply the old wit and the old charm.

Since her word was law he asked her in August to decide whether they should go to Hughenden, where the air of Buckinghamshire might do her so much good, or remain in London so that she might be spared the fatigue of the journey. She found these decisions difficult, but decided for the moment to stay in London.

They settled down to pass the summer in London. It was the first time in the whole of their lives that the summer recess had not seen them either at Hughenden or staying at country houses, or wandering on the Continent, but Disraeli did not repine. He had ceased altogether to think of himself, and the effect on him of the lack of change after the labours of a parliamentary session does not seem to have occurred to him. He and Mary Anne were like two children lost in a forest with a storm coming on. They had only one instinct, to creep close to one another and comfort each other in the face of immense danger and tragedy they could do nothing to avert.

On the one or two occasions before Parliament rose, when he was obliged to leave her for a time, he wrote her small, loving, pathetic notes, and she replied with equal affection and pathos, thanking him for his unending kindness. When Parliament rose he never left her at all, and refused to dine out. Henceforward until her death there was no one in the world for him but Mary Anne.

Her disease pursued its inevitable course and she suffered from repeated hæmorrhages that left her weak and exhausted. The whole burden of Disraeli's communications with his friends was: "If only she could eat! She is so weak and how is she to keep up her strength without food?" Unfortunately a patient suffering from cancer of the stomach cannot eat from the very nature of her complaint.

Poor Mary Ann suffered additionally from the scientific limitations of the period in which she lived. Much might possibly be done for a similar case nowadays by means of X-rays and radium, but Sir William Gull had neither X-rays nor radium at his disposal. Nowadays dietetic experts might be able to help with a carefully planned diet, but in 1872 the subject of dietetics had not been given attention. Instead, all her friends sent her the most tempting dishes their *chefs* were able to produce, far too rich in all probability for her enfeebled digestion. She was grateful, but she could not eat the dishes.

They endeavoured in spite of everything to make the best

of the house in Grosvenor Gate. It looked over Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, and they tried to pretend that Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens were the woodlands of Hughenden. In those days the name "Park Lane" had not its present ironic significance and the thoroughfare exhibited a certain sylvan charm. At least Mary Anne lying on her bed of sickness was spared the continual roar and vibration of motor-buses passing between Oxford Street and Piccadilly.

In spite of all her sufferings, Mary Anne still remained gay. She might indeed be very ill, but she was a loved woman. Her Dizzy remained continually with her; he said in September that he had never been into town all through August and as much of September as had passed.

Failing anything better Dizzy used to take Mary Anne for long drives. There again she suffered from the limitations of her time. She reckoned that between August 1st and September 30th she drove 220 miles, an easy day's run for the humblest baby-car nowadays. How Mary Anne would have loved to be wafted in a fast, silent-running car from Grosvenor Gate to the sea with which she had early and happy associations, or to Hughenden, or even to the West Country of her birth, where the little village of Brampford Speke would awake old memories. She might have loved even more to travel by air to Paris, and in her favourite hotel overlooking the Tuileries Gardens relive the days of her honeymoon.

But Mary Anne disposed of neither car nor aeroplane, and so the two old people planned expeditions into the country capable of being undertaken in a horsed carriage. Fortunately for them the area of their London was comparatively small and the country could be reached with much greater ease than is possible to-day. Leaning back in her carriage listening to the grindings of the wheels, the hoof beats of the solemn horses and the creak of saddlery, Mary Anne thanked heaven for another day, a little more sunshine, the green of the trees and, above all, her Dizzy's devoted companionship.

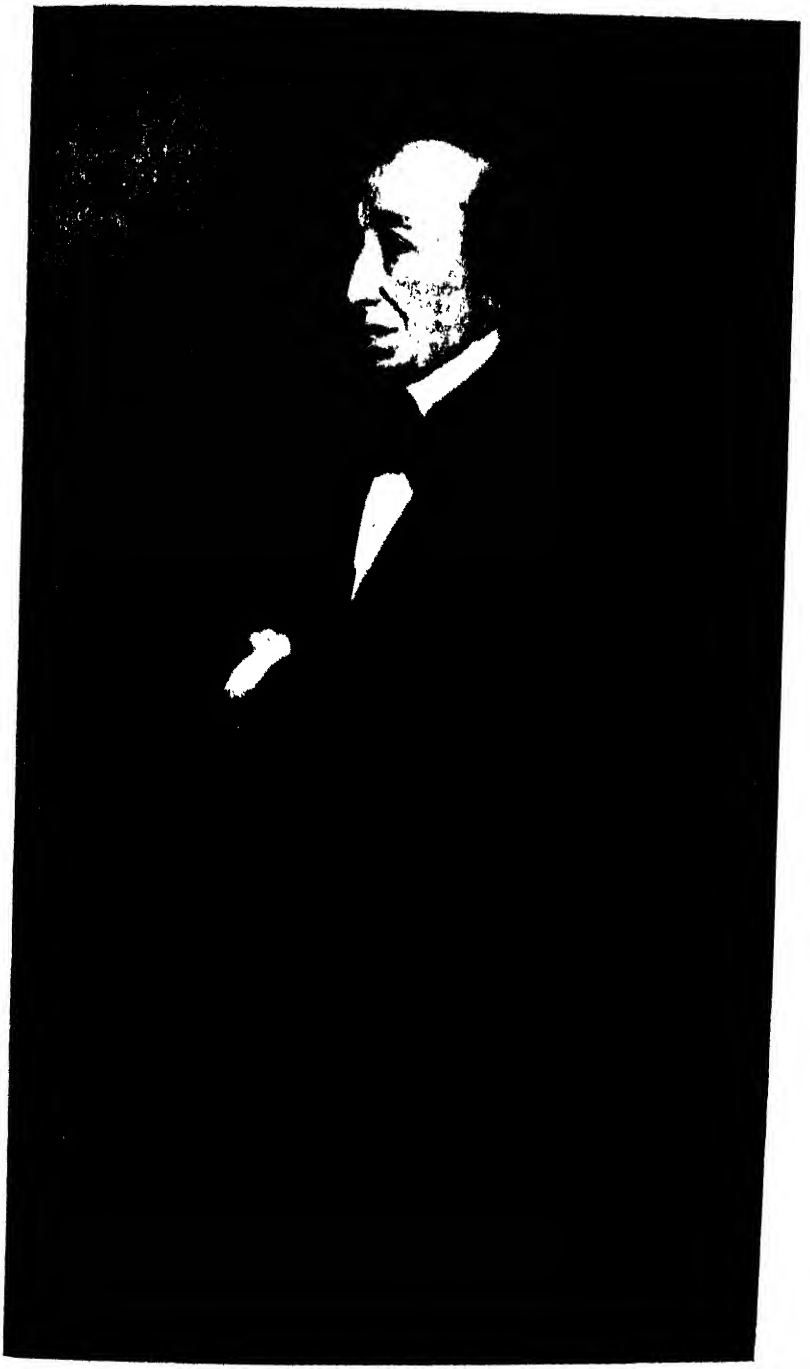
Sitting beside the haggard old lady who had once been his beautiful Mary Anne his mind may have flashed back to another carriage in which he posted two thousand miles with Sara Austen and her husband. How patiently Sara had instructed him in his youth, and if she were alive she must be an old woman, almost as old as Mary Anne. He had travelled far since the Austens and he rode from Paris through Dijon to Switzerland, but had he attained happiness?

From the pinnacle of his sixty-eight years he decided that there is no happiness in achievement except when it coincides with the moment of desire. If Peel had offered him a place in the Government it would have meant more to him than a dozen future premierships, because in the thirties one desires fame greatly, and in the sixties one greets it with a faintly deprecating smile. But Peel offered him nothing, and by the time he became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Derby's Government much of the savour had departed from office. Gladstone could not carry on a Government much longer, and that meant that sooner or later the Queen would send for Mr. Disraeli, but what did he care now that Mary Anne was going to die?

Riding out of London behind the solemn horses, he saw the endless vista of new villas which had sprung up. He had no idea there were so many villas in existence; queer how one's life became bounded by the House, the Carlton, Grosvenor Gate and Mary Anne. Still there would not be any Grosvenor Gate or Mary Anne very much longer. In all these villas lived the householders and ratepayers he had enfranchised by his Reform Bill of 1867 which, as Derby puts it, had dished the Whigs. Now all the inhabitants of the villas would vote for the Party of Mr. Disraeli, who had enfranchised them, and put him in office again, but Mary Anne would be dead, so what did it matter?

In each of the villas lived some married couple, like Mary Anne and himself. Were they happy? Did marriage on the whole bring happiness? Not marriage for love because, as he declared once, all his friends who married for love either separated or beat their wives. One would never have lived happily for an instance with Henrietta. Marriages of affection, such as his and Mary Anne's, were different. What had the Duchess written about them in her letter? Something about a life of loving and perfect companionship. That was the word, companionship. He realised that he loved Mary Anne because she had always been a perfect companion, whatever the state of their worldly affairs. Now she was dying, and could life ever again seem tolerable after her death?

They had never been separated for thirty-three years, and at sixty-eight the wrenching apart of so many ties filled him with misery and despair. What would he do in future when the black mood came down upon him? Mary Anne had always laughed it away with one of her solemnly ridiculous remarks. Although he took the most tender care of her she also took care of him. The older a man grew the more he needed a woman to care take



LORD BEACONSFIELD
From the portrait by Millais in the National Portrait Gallery.

of him. But Mary Anne could not continue beside him in a very long stay. She always wanted him because of their thirty-three years together, but no other woman would be likely to want an old man of sixty-eight, and to a completely unwanted old man life can seem very weary.

The solemn horses trotted on. Presently they found themselves back at Grosvenor Gate. Mary Anne went to bed and Disraeli bade her good night with a heavy heart, but in the amazing manner of invalids she made, in the days that followed, most heartening progress. The improvement brought Disraeli immense happiness. With some of the old optimism which distinguished his youth, he persuaded himself that it would be permanent.

Perhaps Mary Anne thought so too, or perhaps in a final effort she was gathering her remaining strength so that she might return home to die.

She said she felt much better and stronger and would like to go down to Hughenden.

There was the pleasant house with its two bays, and there were the Florentine vases with which she had adorned the terrace, and the steps leading down from the terrace to the lawn. Her pony carriage awaited her pleasure, and the peacocks still strutted on the terrace, and the horses she loved pricked their ears expectantly in the stables waiting for her to come to them as of old.

Mary Anne was back at Hughenden, the home she loved, and at Hughenden even cancer did not seem quite so bad.

She had put all her heart and soul into making Hughenden a fitting home for her dear Dizzy. She remembered so well those exhausting days of moving furniture and books from Bradenham after Isaac died. No one, surely, had ever seen such an incredible number of books. The friendliness of the house and gardens and woods seemed to put its arms round her and tell her that Hughenden loved her and would take care of her and save her from the dreadful prospect of death.

Dizzy, she knew, felt similarly happy. He delighted in Hughenden equally with her, though not perhaps with quite the same understanding because much of Hughenden resulted from her careful planning and her skill in tree-planting. Not only was she a wonderful housekeeper but a born landscape gardener. It had given her such pleasure to improve Hughenden for Dizzy.

Now, with new-found vitality derived from the sparkling Buckinghamshire air, she could manage to accompany him about the place in her little pony carriage. His pride of possession never diminished. He revelled in walking through the

woods and gardens talking to men at their work or watching his head woodman fell a tree. None knew better than Mary Anne what a great day it had been in Dizzy's life when he became a landed gentleman.

Best of all, at Hughenden her appetite returned, and she could eat once more. Gone were those terrible days when food revolted her and she maintained life by force of will alone. Perhaps the terrible days might never come back, for even her doctors spoke optimistically about her health. They seemed deeply impressed by her return to appetite and assured her that as long as she continued to eat she need not feel any alarm as to her condition.

It touched Mary Anne profoundly to witness Dizzy's joy at the improvement in her health and the verdict of her doctors. She admitted to herself that she wished to live far more for Dizzy's sake than for her own; truly she loved life, but at eighty a woman might be forgiven if she felt a little weary. The reflection impressed her suddenly with its strangeness, because not till quite lately had she known what it meant to feel weary. For Dizzy's sake one must conquer this weakness and continue to desire life rather than death, because without her he would be so forlorn, and besides one had to think of the house at Grosvenor Gate. When she died it would pass to the Lewises, and how could Dizzy exist without a town house?

The Queen was very kind and made repeated enquiries after Mary Anne's health. She liked the Queen because Her Majesty appreciated Dizzy and sent him flowers. Besides, purely on account of Dizzy needless to say, Her Majesty had conferred the dignity of Viscountess on Mary Anne. She dared hardly admit even to herself how much that "B" surmounted by a coronet on her notepaper meant to her, or how she loved to sign her letters to Dizzy "Beaconsfield." It was all very childish of course, but indescribably sweet. If you were dying of cancer, and you had loved your husband faithfully for thirty-three years, and he asked the Queen to create you a Viscountess, and Her Majesty consented, surely you were entitled to look upon your distinction with pride? Not very often had a woman been made a Viscountess in her own right. It had been darling of Dizzy to think of that, and yet it was just like Dizzy. Mary Anne, like any other woman, knew her own value with the greatest accuracy, and yet, like any other woman, she loved to be esteemed by the man she loved.

The Queen had been kind, and the Rothschilds were kind,

and Montagu Corry, Dizzy's secretary, had been kind. The kindness of every one touched her, and she remembered that all her life-long people had been kind to her. Was it simply chance, or did she really make such an impression on them that they wanted to be kind? At that Mary Anne smiled, in spite of her cancer. She knew she had always been a darling and that darlings have no age. Until the grave closed over her people would continue to be kind, because she possessed charm.

Perhaps when she had gone, for Mary Anne cherished no illusions as to her fate, Montagu Corry would help Dizzy to struggle with the tiresome necessities of life. She had always liked Montagu Corry and considered him the pearl of secretaries. Besides, he shared a delightful consideration for old ladies which presupposed a heart of gold.

Montagu Corry possessed indeed a heart of gold. There is a passage in *Endymion*, Disraeli's novel published in 1880 when he was seventy-six, which is almost certainly inspired by Corry. Incidentally Longmans paid the aged statesman £10,000 for all rights in *Endymion*. The passage runs:

> "The relations between a minister and his secretary are, or at least should be, among the finest that can subsist between two individuals. Except the married state, there is none in which so great a confidence is involved, in which more forbearance ought to be exercised, or more sympathy ought to exist. There is usually in the relations an identity of interest, and that of the highest kind; and the perpetual difficulties, the alternations of triumph and defeat, develop devotion. A youthful secretary will naturally feel some degree of enthusiasm for his Chief, and a wise minister will never stint his regard for one in whose intelligence and honour he finds he can place confidence."

So, at Hughenden, Mary Anne entered upon the last of her happy days, a kind of Indian summer which comforted her before her eventual plunge into the dark waters of death. Never had she found herself more cherished because people, realising her sufferings, admired so whole-heartedly her gay courage. Disraeli wrote about it to the Queen. It inspired him with the rather easy optimism which distinguished him throughout his life. Since this was an improvement, obviously the improvement must last.

Sorrowfully enough, Mary Anne waned with the waning year. The temporary improvement in her appetite disappeared

to the distress of Dizzy. The doctors said consoling things, as doctors do. In spite of everything she continued to enjoy life in so far as her strength permitted.

All the mouth-watering delicacies sent to her by her friends she left untasted, as might be imagined. It seems indeed to have been a curious age. Who, nowadays, would send tempting dishes to a woman suffering from cancer of the stomach, since her disease must prevent her from eating them, and the sight of them make her envious of others to whom such dishes appealed? But food was the god of the Victorians. They had a deplorable ambition to eat and eat in order, as they believed, to keep up their strength.

Mary Anne, therefore, putting aside the cookery of her friends, declined gracefully, quietly, and resignedly towards the crisis of her complaint.

She and Dizzy remained amid the peace of Hughenden, but his restless nature forbade him peace. He continued a wide correspondence, much of it occupied with the malady of poor Mary Anne. Politics continued to absorb at least part of his attention. It might have been the superficial improvement in Mary Anne which gave him the political impetus. Or, perhaps the instinct for governing persists, come weal come woe, through grief, heart-break, and disappointment. Disraeli at least had the instinct for governing, and consequently it remained too powerful to be resisted, taking his mind away even from Mary Anne, who was dying, whatever the doctors said.

It was part of the supreme courage of Mary Anne that she chose to live not as though she was dying but as though she enjoyed robust health. Thus she continued to receive visitors and dispense the hospitality of Hughenden with imperishable charm. The truth is that the instinct of a hostess never deserted her, so much so that when a certain man guest arrived she took sufficient thought for him to put a French novel in his room.

Disraeli became the victim of alternate hopes and fears. When her appetite improved he had written confidently to the Queen during the month of September, but October saw him completely pessimistic. Mary Anne went on quietly with her life, appearing when she felt at her best and disappearing during her bad moments. Like any other woman she wished, in so far as it might still be possible, to look her best.

Her despairing husband once more consulted his doctor, and as before, the doctor insisted on taking a favourable view. So long as Lady Beaconsfield could take nourishment he did not

despair of the case. What else could he say of an old lady of eighty with cancer of the stomach?

Mary Anne may have gathered some comfort from his visit. At any rate she summoned up the energy to give a little house party. More ambitious still, she engaged herself to go out and make a call, but the weather prevented it.

The house party provided Mary Anne's last fun in a world she had loved so much, wherein she had found herself so happy. It consisted mostly of men, and she enjoyed it to the limit of her strength. Her guests enjoyed it also, and one of them wrote her a long amusing letter of thanks. He began in a light-hearted strain, but he ended on a note of very sincere gratitude and he was young at that. Evidently to the last Mary Anne retained her charm. She was within a month of her death, but still she could attract this young man, strike exactly the right note, and send him away full of the most affectionate sentiments toward her and her Dizzy. Few women stricken with a mortal disease would have felt sufficiently interested in a young man to make his stay at a country house party so happy that he declared he would always remember it.

Autumn passed and winter came in. Buckinghamshire is cold in winter and a bleak wind blew down from the hills among the trees of Hughenden. Within the house it was warm, but the depression of winter penetrated even to the rooms where Mary Anne fought her losing battle. Although her appetite had improved she could not be considered as eating normally and the wintry aspect of the countryside seen from her windows seemed dark with foreboding. She had passed her eightieth birthday in the month of November. It was the last birthday she would ever see.

The impressive and Sphinx-like countenance of Disraeli set in an Oriental mask of inscrutability had passed almost into a proverb, but now those about him could see that even the Sphinx possessed a capacity for emotion. The impassive expression departed and another infinitely sad and woe-begone replaced it. He could not endure the thought of Mary Anne's suffering, and he knew that she suffered.

Early in December the crisis began, for in addition to the disease which had afflicted her for so long Mary Anne became ill with congestion of the lungs. It was then that Disraeli abandoned all hope and wrote to his friend and solicitor, Philip Rose, begging him to come in the event of Mary Anne's death.

Now the brave old lady battling for her life became a centre of interest for the whole of England. Disraeli's postbag over-

flowed with letters of sympathy, not only from those who knew him, but from complete strangers, and the Queen telegraphed three times to enquire after Mary Anne. Her Majesty well understood the emotions of Disraeli; she, too, had lost her life partner, as Disraeli was about to lose his, and since her loss life had never been the same. Apart from that one of the most delightful features of the Queen's character was her respect for family ties and her interests in family matters, not only in the case of her own, but in that of others also. She liked and respected this venerable pair who had fought their way side by side to an influential position in the country. Also Disraeli was her favourite minister. He sent her reports of proceedings in Parliament that read like extracts from his novels, and never, like Mr. Gladstone, addressed her as though she were a public meeting.

None of these things, not even the gracious sympathy of the Sovereign, consoled Disraeli. He hardly ever left the room where Mary Anne was making her last desperate fight against death. She had a theory that people need not die as long as they refused to resign themselves and continued full of the will to live. Sir Henry Lucy wrote in his diary that, like Queen Elizabeth, she refused to go to bed in her last illness, and died in her chair.

It is some comfort for those who love and admire Mary Anne to reflect that probably she never knew she was dying. Towards the end her brain became clouded and she suffered from delusions. Although her iron constitution enabled her to continue the physical struggle against death her mind wandered, a condition which intensified her husband's grief. She died on December 15th, 1872, from carcinoma, pneumonia, and bronchitis.

Her gay and gallant life had closed in darkness and suffering, but she died as she had lived, a brave and affectionate woman without one word of complaint on account of her own sufferings, full of the most touching gratitude for the kindness of her husband and her friends. She loved laughter and had the rare gift of being able to laugh at herself. She said once during her last illness that now she felt sure people ate too much, but she would rather like to be able to eat a little herself.

The great world paid her in death a magnificent tribute. The Queen wrote to Disraeli from the depths of her understanding heart, even apologising for intruding on his grief. The Prince and Princess of Wales expressed their royal sympathy, and the Queen of the Netherlands and the King of the Belgians sent condolences. Mary Anne, a little girl from Devonshire,

involved in her passing the emotions of kings. Russell and Rosebery, the Empress of Austria and the Duc d'Aumale, by written expressions of sorrow, mourned and regretted her.

Gladstone's letter of sympathy has been referred to on another page. Gladstone was a shining example of a dual personality. In abstract matters, the Church, the Divorce Bill, and so on, he preserved an academic rectitude remote from any human emotion, but he had another side. Directly any event left the academic plane for the human, there entered upon the scene Gladstone, the affectionate husband, the good father, the family man. Writing to Disraeli on the death of Mary Anne he wept with him in his loss, for they had been married in the same year, and congratulated himself humbly that Catherine still lived to adorn and sweeten his private life and transform No. 13 Carlton House Terrace from a house into a home.

Thereafter it remained to bury poor Mary Anne.

They gave her the very simplest funeral, more in keeping with her personality as Mary Anne than as Viscountess Beaconsfield. The tenants of the estate bore the coffin as she went to church for the last time. The scene recalled her native Devon and the village of Brampford Speke, for the Buckinghamshire and the Devonshire villagers are alike simple, sturdy men, except that the men of Bucks, bred upon their stiff clayey soil, have a certain dourness not found in Devonshire men, the sons of rich red earth.

Hardly anyone followed her home. The only mourners near to her were Disraeli, Philip Rose, his lawyer, Montagu Corry, his secretary, and the doctor. After them came the servants and the villagers, a pathetic little procession.

They laid her to rest on a wild wet day. On such a day a mist would be over the Valley of the Exe, where she was born, and it may be that the tides which ebb and flow off the West Indies stirred the bones of Lieutenant John Evans, R.N., her father, where beneath the waves with round shot slung at his head and feet he slept his last sleep. Quietly and reverently in the little church and in the churchyard they read the burial service over her:

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. . . .

"Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dead sister here departed, we therefore commit her body to the ground; earth

to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

"I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours."

The majestic words had no power to comfort Disraeli. He listened to them like a man in a dream. He had walked hatless in the pitiless rain from Hughenden to the church, and remained standing for ten long minutes beside the vault, incapable of deserting Mary Anne, so small and so cold, who must be left forever without the warmth of fire or love, she who had adored gaiety and brightness, the company of her friends and above all this bowed, stricken man, his face chalk white, his dyed hair plastered against his head by the rain.

A villager, staring at him, muttered half pityingly:

"He'll have no one to dye his hair for him now!"

Not only had he no one to dye his hair, but he lost his London home and the £5000 a year Mary Anne had inherited from Wyndham Lewis. He was obliged to remove to a hotel in George Street, Hanover Square, whence no vista of the Park and Kensington Gardens could be enjoyed.

From all the great and the powerful came tributes to the memory of Mary Anne. The Queen wrote sympathising with Disraeli, for she too knew what it meant to be divided by death from a life partner and eulogising Mary Anne. Her Majesty made reference to the fact that the day before Mary Anne's death was the anniversary of the death of the Prince Consort. The Prince and Princess of Wales and many foreign royalties added to the chorus of praise and regret. Gladstone, as has been mentioned already, wrote in a most human and friendly strain. Saddest and most beautiful of all was the letter from Mary Anne herself, written in 1856, found among her papers. In it she begged that if she died before Disraeli they should be buried in the same grave, "at whatever distance you may die from England." She called him her kindest and dearest, prayed God to bless him, and that he would not live alone, and told him she was his devoted Mary Anne.

Sadly, with tears, he continued to discover evidence of her love and faithfulness. There were all the hair she had ever cut from his head, each cutting in its separate wrapping, and every-

thing he had ever written to her. Truly we may be judged by what were our treasures which others find after we are dead.

Then, to escape from his grief and loneliness, he plunged headlong into the affairs of the Conservative Party.

For the rest of his life he continued to write on black-edged note paper, and as it happened he never married again, though he proposed to Lady Chesterfield, and was refused. Her ladyship at the time had attained her seventieth year, and did not wish to marry. Besides, she knew Disraeli to be in love with her sister, Lady Bradford, who was married already. Both ladies were grandmothers.

They supplied Disraeli's eternal need of feminine confidantes and correspondents. In the official Life, Mr. Buckle states that there have been preserved 500 of his letters to Lady Chesterfield, and 1,100 to Lady Bradford, but in a period of twelve years he only wrote 250 to Mrs. Brydges Willyams. He told Lady Bradford he had lived to know that the twilight of love has its splendour and richness.

Contradictory as it may sound in the light of all this correspondence with their ladyships, some of which took a most affectionate turn, he remained faithful to the memory of Mary Anne. In death, as in life, she continued the one woman in his existence. If he wrote admiring and affectionate letters to other women the black edging of his note-paper bespoke at all times his fidelity to Mary Anne. Even the proposal to Lady Chesterfield does not bely that fidelity. He was lonely and longed for companionship; Mary Anne had made marriage such a blessed state for him that he was prepared to risk it a second time, even at an advanced age. That in its way offered a charming compliment to her memory.

When the elections were held a Conservative landslide took place. They had a majority of fifty over all the others put together, and one of more than a hundred over the Liberals. Gladstone resigned, not only on behalf of his Government, but also as leader of the Liberal Party. He wished for leisure in which to pursue his classical and religious studies and preferred the obscurity of a private Member of Parliament. At the meeting of the new Parliament Disraeli said handsome things about him—after all, he had been Mary Anne's friend—and perhaps Gladstone appreciated them, and perhaps not.

Disraeli remained in power from 1874 to 1880, a great figure, the friend and trusted minister of his Sovereign. He had attained the position almost of omnipotence which he had longed

to occupy all his life, and fulfilled his ambition, an ageing statesman with an incomparable gift of charm, basking in the sunshine of popularity and fame, and at heart the loneliest old man in the world, because there was no Mary Anne to share the glory which had manifested itself too late.

So Mary Anne passed, and remained merely a memory in the hearts of her husband and of her friends. We have followed her eager footsteps through her long and adventurous life and the time has come to bid her farewell. She lies, as she desired so greatly, in the same grave as her husband who, when his time came, was laid to rest with her in the vault in the churchyard of Hughenden where, on the death of Mrs. Brydges Willyams, he declared that neither Mary Anne nor he should be buried.

Mary Anne was not a great woman in the conventional interpretation of the word, and her place in history depends on the fact that she was her husband's wife. That statement apart, nothing too high can be said in her praise.

Her qualities included beauty, charm, courage, a loving heart, and faithfulness, all excellent things in a woman. In marrying a man twelve years younger than herself at the age of forty-seven, she attempted an impossible task, and in it succeeded triumphantly. She proved herself, as Disraeli wrote, a perfect wife, she was kind to old, blind Isaac, and so far as there is any record, she never made an enemy.

The perfection of Mary Anne's nature may be understood from her own statement: "My life has been such a happy one. I have had so much affection and no troubles—no contradictions." Only the most delightful woman could exert such a happy influence over everyone she met as to be able to say that she had never endured any contradictions.

The little feet of Mary Anne were gay and loved to dance, and her small mouth with its beautifully chiselled lips loved to smile. For this reason it comforts those who love and admire her to remember that she lived all her days in the sunshine, and before she died saw honour heaped upon Disraeli and herself.

We might do worse than take farewell of her in five lines from Swinburne's one really great poem:

> "Content thee howso'er, whose days are done;
> There lies not any troublous thing before,
> Nor sight, nor sound to war against thee more,
> For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
> All waters as the shore."

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